



**Increasing Young People's
Employment Opportunities
(18-24) within County Durham**

**Report of Corporate Management Team
Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive**

Purpose of the Report

- 1 The attached report presents the findings of a Scrutiny Review Working Group, looking at Increasing Employment Opportunities for Young People (18-24).

Background

- 2 Quarterly performance reports to the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee identified RED PI 7, the number of 18-24 year olds claiming Jobseekers Allowance, as an area of underperformance.
- 3 As part of the refresh of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme in July 2011, Members identified the need for a focused piece of work to be undertaken looking at how Durham County Council and Partners can further develop partnership working to increase the employment opportunities of young people (18-24) within County Durham.
- 4 The Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the Review would look at:
 - understanding the national policy context and the implications for County Durham;
 - understand employment trends within County Durham;
 - details of various interventions available for young people aged 18-24 years of age;
 - work currently in place to enhance employment opportunities for young people;
 - engagement activity with employers; and issues /barriers experienced by employers in relation to employing young people;
 - examining case studies of young people engaged in various interventions and examples of best practice in relation to employer engagement;
 - visits to various providers to see the support currently available to young people in the 18-24 age group.
- 5 The Working Group has met on a number of occasions between October 2011 and February 2012 to receive evidence. Its findings are detailed in the attached report which identifies a number of conclusions and recommendations.

Service response

- 6 The following comments have been received from the Regeneration and Economic Development Service Grouping:
- The Regeneration and Economic Development Service Group welcome the findings of the Scrutiny report which will be taken forward in conjunction with the County Durham Economic Partnership. As one of the key objectives within the Regeneration Statement, the Service Group is acutely aware of the need to improve, target and better coordinate services to those people in County Durham who are without employment and potentially marginalised during the difficult economic circumstances at the present time.
 - Statistical releases continue to highlight the increasing numbers of young people unable to access work. The evidence provided by both businesses through this review and the Economic Partnership, from its ongoing work, demonstrate the need to ensure young people are supported and directed towards, as well as hold appropriate expectations, of employment. The service continues to work with businesses to identify a range of employment opportunities with a greater emphasis on brokerage and support that are appropriate for young people.
 - The findings of the review will help to give further direction and clarity to the work of the Council and its many Partners who are striving to get people back into work or training. The emerging Business Enterprise and Skills Strategy developed by the County Durham Economic Partnership includes an objective that relates to increase aspirations, namely we will have raised the aspirations of County Durham's current and future workforce so that they are able to compete for jobs and take opportunities to progress their careers. This is felt to be an essential aspect of the ongoing work with the 18-24 year old age group to ensure that against a backdrop of an aging workforce, businesses remain competitive and individuals have the opportunity to prosper.

Recommendations

- 7 Cabinet is asked to note the recommendations in the report (attached) and to formulate a response within the six month period identified in the report for systematic review of recommendations.
- 8 That the report is shared, for information, with the County Durham Economic Partnership.

Background Papers

None.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – A number of various funding streams, Single Programme, Working Neighbourhoods (WNF) and Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) have been abolished. In addition job creation schemes such as Future Jobs Fund (FJF) no longer exist. The Authority, working in partnership, has to look at accessing any new funding currently available from Government and any new Job creation Schemes.

Staffing – None.

Risk – None.

Equality and Diversity – Equality and Diversity issues will be addressed within the individual initiatives and schemes which provide employment support and job creation.

Accommodation – None.

Crime and Disorder – None.

Human Rights – None.

Consultation – Stakeholders who are involved in increasing employment opportunities for 18 to 24 year olds have been engaged in the review process and have contributed significantly to informing the review report.

Procurement – None.

Disability Issues – Disability issues will be addressed within any individual initiatives and schemes which provide employment support and job creation opportunities.

Legal Implications – None.