

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

28th April 2014

Progress Towards a Partnership Approach to Supporting Opportunities for Young People within County Durham Update Report



Report of Andy Palmer – Head of Strategy, Programmes and Performance

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress towards delivering a partnership approach to supporting employment and training opportunities for young people within County Durham.

Background

- 2.1 It is well documented that youth unemployment is a growing concern not only in County Durham but across the UK. With 10,500 more young people aged 16-24 year olds out of work since the start of the economic downturn within the county it is imperative we take a proactive approach to promoting opportunities for young residents within County Durham.
- 2.2 The County Durham Economic Partnership's County Durham Regeneration Statement 2012 – 2022 outlines our economic regeneration ambitions for the county. *Competitive and Successful People* is one of the five ambitions highlighted within the Statement, recognising that to create sustainable places and to boost economic growth we must raise aspirations, participation and attainment of young people and the opportunities available to them.
- 2.3 Some of the underlying issues and challenges we need to address in order to do this include:
 - Transition from education to employment is harder in a recession with a more competitive labour market
 - Rising youth unemployment
 - Persistent high numbers of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)
 - Skills gaps and differing supply and demand
 - Changing employer perceptions

Our Partnership Approach

- 3.0 More recently additional national and European Union resources have been targeted at addressing these and other economic issues across the country. County Durham was allocated €157m of EU Structural Funding as a transitional area (currently under review by BIS) as well as being covered by an allocation of €539.6m at the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) level and Central Government has requested spending plans from LEPs as part of determining activity from the Single Local Growth Funds.

- 3.1 Within the NELEP area partners including the County Durham Economic Partnership and Durham County Council have been tasked by central government to produce Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs) and European Structural and Investment Fund Strategies (ESIF). Both documents outline the strategic approach to delivering growth in the economy and cover a wide range of strategic infrastructure projects and projects to address supply and demand issues in the employment market.
- 3.2 The draft SEP and ESIF have both now been submitted to Government. Initial feedback has been received for the ESIF and the Strategy is being refreshed for May 2014. However, feedback is awaited for the SEP and therefore leads to lack of certainty in the approach to planning our associated actions.
- 3.3 Within Durham we have an existing range of strategies, plans, partnership groups, activities, tools and mechanisms in place to provide and supporting opportunities for our young people. In preparation for the release of the European Operational Programme Document which lays out the requirements of what the UK programme will need to deliver and the announcement of which projects will be funded from the SEP submission, the CDEP has established seven workstreams to determine actions to match local needs and priorities to funding opportunities. All of these groups have a focus on the economy of County Durham and one specifically covers youth employment.
- 3.4 This workstream is led by DCC and is currently planning activity that includes increasing Apprenticeships opportunities, training, volunteering social enterprise, transport and a range of social issues impacting upon young people seeking work. Final detail of what activities will be implemented is still to be decided once the full detail of available resources is known.

Next Steps

- 4.0 It is anticipated that Central Government will shortly share with LEPs and Local Government their plans for both EU and other regeneration funding.
- 4.1 Once announced County Durham is well placed and prepared to implement a range of activities at a local level and draw in regional and national programmes to best effect on local priorities.

Recommendations

- 5.0 It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board note the information presented and support the next steps outlined within section 4.0 of the report.
- 5.1 The Regeneration and Economic Development Service Grouping and Children and Adult Services will continue to work closely with partners to support and maximise the opportunities for young people within the county.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None

Staffing – None

Risk – None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty - None

Accommodation – None

Crime and Disorder – None

Human Rights – None

Consultation – None

Procurement – None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications - None