

**Economy and Enterprise
Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**



30 October 2014

Youth Employment Initiative

**Joint Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive and
Rachael Shimmin, Corporate Director Children and Adult Services**

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee with background information on the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) prior to an update presentation by Stephen Crass, Policy, Planning and Partnerships Officer, Improving Progression of Young People Team, Children and Adult Services (on behalf of Linda Bailey, Strategic Lead: Progression and Learning).

Background

2. Members will recall that at the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 10 September 2013 an overview presentation was provided to members on the EU Structural and Investment Funding Programme 2014-20 which included some detail in relation to the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI).
3. It was requested by members at that meeting that the committee receive a presentation on the YEI at a future meeting as this was the first strand of EU funding available to be accessed. Arrangements were therefore made for an overview presentation to be provided to the committee focusing on the YEI at the meeting on 22 January.
4. As part of the refresh of the work programme for 2014/15 members requested that an update be provided on the development of the YEI within County Durham. Arrangements have therefore been made for Stephen Crass, Policy, Planning and Partnerships Officer, Improving Progression of Young People Team, Children and Adult Services (on behalf of Linda Bailey, Strategic Manager, Progression and Learning) to attend the meeting on the 30 October to deliver a presentation focusing on:
 - Youth unemployment – evidence base, challenge and cost;
 - Views of employers and young people;
 - The journey to employment;
 - YEI – identified activities and next steps.

Funding allocations

5. In January 2013, the European Council created the YEI in order to tackle the high levels of youth unemployment across member states. The initiative is worth €6 billion in total and is directed at young people aged 15-24 years old who are unemployed or inactive.
6. In the United Kingdom, the following areas have been identified as eligible for funding: Inner London, Birmingham and Solihull, Coventry, the Black Country, Liverpool, Leicester, Nottingham, Thurrock, Kingston-upon-Hull, Tees Valley and County Durham.
7. The total allocation for County Durham is £20.5m; consisting of £7.7m YEI funding, which is aligned to £7.7m European Social Fund allocation with a requirement to match fund the ESF allocation of £5.1m.
8. In June 2013, the European Council decided to accelerate the implementation of the YEI and front-load allocations in 2014 and 2015. This means that funding has to be committed in 2014 and 2015, with spend finishing in 2018. YEI money and the equivalent amount of match ESF money will need to be committed in 2014 and 2015.

Progress to date in identifying activity themes

9. The Business Enterprise and Skills Group of the County Durham Economic Partnership is leading the development of the ESIF Programme in County Durham. The Group has identified individual leads to be responsible for themes within the programme and tasked them to work with a wide range of partners to develop specifications for activity.
10. In relation to YEI, Linda Bailey has established an Activity Group consisting of a broad range of partners (e.g. schools, further education colleges, other learning providers, Jobcentre Plus, County Durham Youth Offending Service, Youth Contract and Work Programme delivery partners, services responsible for vulnerable young people etc.). This group has met regularly since autumn 2013 to:
 - Analyse local needs and opportunities;
 - Identify best practice and gaps in existing delivery;
 - Consider innovative ideas to address youth unemployment.

11. As a result, activities have been identified within the following broad themes:
- **Supporting young people's transitions** – Transition Advisers will support young people who engage in YEI activities by undertaking an initial diagnostic assessment; engaging young people on appropriate activities; helping them to overcome barriers to employment and supporting their sustained progression. On-going support will also be provided by peer mentors (both volunteers and Apprentices) working alongside Transition Advisers to support young people to realise their full potential.
 - **Raising aspirations for vulnerable young people** – Activities to increase confidence, improve resilience and support progression into education, employment and training amongst identified groups of young people.
 - **Supporting young people's employment** – Activities to develop young people's employability skills and tailored pre-employment support, underpinned by work with employers to increase the number of employment opportunities for young people.
 - **Re-engagement Activities** – Innovative programmes to engage, motivate and inspire young people who are unemployed and need help to find employment. They will learn how to search for job opportunities, gain work experience and join in team building activities.
12. The Government recently issued updated guidance which stipulates that only young people who are unemployed or inactive can benefit from YEI. This means that funding cannot be directed at young people who are engaged in full-time education to support NEET preventative activities. The proposed programme of activities is currently being reviewed to ensure it reflects this and also incorporates the outcomes of a YEI Workshop involving over 40 partners that took place in September 2014.

Involvement of Young People

13. One of the priorities identified at the outset of the project has been to ensure that young people have a key role in shaping the YEI. As part of this process, a series of focus groups was initiated, targeting specific groups of young people and an on-line survey of young people was undertaken to ascertain their views about the causes of youth unemployment and what actions can be taken to address them.
14. In terms of measures that would help young people to get and keep a job, a number of responses highlighted the importance of work experience; more employment opportunities available to young people; and appropriate information, advice, guidance and support.
15. Other methods to engage young people in the development of YEI include setting up a Simpl Challenge (in conjunction with the Federation of Small Business North East, County Durham Foundation, and the County Durham Economic Partnership). This is a tool to encourage young people and others to post their ideas on-line in relation to a social issue e.g. how can we tackle youth unemployment in County Durham?

16. We will be collecting ideas until Monday, 10 November 2014 and the best ones will be presented at an event in December. There will be funding awards as well as mentoring available to enable winners to develop their ideas further. The following categories will be eligible for a prize:
- Best individual idea
 - Best youth group idea
 - Best business idea

We would be grateful if you could encourage young people, businesses and other members of the community to submit their ideas via the following link:
www.simpl.co

Next Steps

17. Discussions are taking place with colleagues in the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, the Department for Work and Pensions (the Government Department that currently has responsibility for delivering ESF), as well as potential opt-in partners, in order to seek clarification regarding a number of technical issues.
18. Helen Radcliffe has recently been appointed as YEI Development Manager and in addition to leading a review of the current proposed programme of activities; she is also reviewing the role and membership of the Activity Group, to ensure appropriate governance arrangements for the YEI are in place. The intention is to have a detailed specification ready during autumn 2014, in order to inform a future commissioning process / open call for delivery projects.

Recommendations

19. Members of the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment upon the information provided during the presentation.
20. That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a further progress report on the development of the Youth Employment Initiative within County Durham at a future meeting of the Committee.

Background Papers

Economy and Enterprise OSC – 27 January 2014 - Report and presentation on the Youth Employment Initiative.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None

Staffing –None

Risk – None

Equality and Diversity – None

Accommodation - None

Crime and Disorder – None

Human Rights – None

Consultation – None.

Procurement – None

Disability Discrimination Act –None

Legal Implications – None