

## **INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES – SKILLS STRATEGY FOR WEST NORFOLK**

### **Background**

The Skills Partnership of West Norfolk LSP has been asked to develop an approach and programme of investment for Investing in Communities (IIC) funding to be delivered during the 07-11 IIC Business Plan period. It is recognised that investing in communities provides just one element of the wider activities trying to tackle the very low levels of skills and educational attainment and aspiration in West Norfolk.

The Skills Partnership requested that a small group be established to take forward and develop the proposals set out below and produce a proposal for approval by the LSP.

### **Discussion**

The group working up these proposals attempted to address two key issues.

1. Ensure that the proposals addressed gaps in current activity.
2. Provide a solution that would inspire young people and act as a catalyst for further learning and progression.

In that context, the group addressed the following issues.

- Target Group
- Criteria for participation
- Approach
- Activities and framework
- Alignment and maximise impact
- Capital and revenue investment plan

### **Target group**

The evidence in West Norfolk is that the skills deficit is significant among young people and that aspirations are low and intensive support is required to reverse this position. Also taking account of other target groups and issues being addressed elsewhere in the County, it is recommended that the target group for West Norfolk, focus on the NEET 16-19 and pre-neet 12-16 age group. Supporting this is a long-term focus of intensive support to families where young people who are or likely to become NEET are prevalent.

### **Criteria**

It is proposed that the criteria for participation are:

NEET

- Those ready for the labour market
- Below level 2 basic skills in English and Maths
- No substance misuse problems and where they exist referral to specialist support provision takes place prior to engagement on the programme.

Pre- NEET

Erratic attendance at school  
Fix-term exclusion/suspension  
Parents who routinely do not engage with school  
NEET siblings (older and younger)  
Under-achievement/sudden performance drop off  
Poor social skills  
Poor basic skills  
Looked after children where appropriate  
Pupils suffering bullying leading to performance being affected

### **Approach**

Working within an overall framework of 'active mentoring' the approach will be to engage with the target group as a step towards wider family engagement in learning. Initially basic and life skills will be developed within a vocational learning framework, delivered outside mainstream institutional settings. The focus of this approach is that it must lead to an employment or further learning opportunity. The aim is to phase investment and development of learning and vocational opportunities over the 08-11 period and possibly beyond and create the opportunity to provide 'intensive support' to individuals and families where required.

### **Activities and Framework**

The approach taken will depend on the category of the young person.

#### Pre-NEET

These are likely to fall into 2 groups

- A Poor attenders/underachievers/low level of basic or social skills who are still engaged in schools
- B Those who are excluded with no school engagement

It is suggested that group A are offered one or two days at the unit to undertake a range of activities relevant to their individual needs but with a strong personal development and work preparation theme which is linked to a vocational area (construction, creative arts, tourism/sport, health & social care). The aim is to improve engagement in learning and raise aspiration through active mentoring and skills development within a vocational context building on the success of programmes such as increased flexibility and liC Embedded Skills for Life.

Group B will have a more directed programme and are likely to attend the unit for two or three days with the remaining time on not-school activity. Active mentoring and course delivery will provide the link and support for the not-school activity where required as well as providing opportunities for 3 GCSEs or related qualifications (Skills for Life Entry/1/2 etc) to include Maths/numeracy, English/literacy plus a creative/practical qualification. Alongside this there will be work preparation activities using the Ready for Work model and personal skills development linked to vocational areas.

The main source of revenue funding is yet to be confirmed but likely sources to be investigated include schools, Current liC revenue projects, Children's Services, LSC and Key Stage 4 engagement programme.

### NEET

Made up a number of different groups

- A Those who attended but now have dropped out of college
- B Those who were in employment but now are unemployed
- C Those who have never engaged in education, employment or training
- D Single parents

The programme will need to ascertain the reasons for disengagement for those in groups A and B through the mentoring process.

For those in A and B who are seeking to return to college or start college but who are unable to access a place until September – the challenge will be to keep them actively engaged and maintain motivation for learning. The programme is likely to include an assessment of their basic and social skills needs and activities to improve these where required. Additionally high level IAG will be required to confirm the direction they wish to take is appropriate and a range of taster opportunities with the college could support this approach. Vocationally embedded learning opportunities will be available at the unit to support the development of skills for life and allow additional taster opportunities.

For those in groups A and B who are seeking employment – a programme of work preparation using the ready for work model supported by high quality work experience will be offered. This will include vocationally embedded skills for life activity for those who require this level of support. The key to success will be the identification of employers willing to offer work experience and close working with Work Based learning and E2E providers.

The most challenging group will be the disengaged who did not go into education, employment or training. The challenge here is to change the culture of disengagement whilst at the same time providing basic and social skills to equip them for the future. Active mentoring will be the initial activity to identify the “trigger” which will engage them supported by a variety of taster activities and other support.

The main source of revenue funding is yet to be confirmed but likely sources to be investigated include Current liC revenue projects, Connexions, LSC and Colleges/WBL providers.

### **Diplomas/Creative and Media**

We would be keen to encompass the new Diplomas into this work as they offer a clear progression route to both employment and further study and are unit based and will be available at different levels.

Initially we would see Creative and Media as a possible focus of activity for both Pre NEET and some NEETs. Using the overarching framework of the Creative and Media industries we would aim to offer a range of activities that incorporate Functional Skills in Maths English and ICT, Personal and Thinking

skills and work readiness using creative and media as the vehicle. As the aim would be to link to the Creative and Media Diploma and so activities would be centred on the sectors and disciplines of the Diploma. These are listed below:

2D Visual Art	Drama
3D Visual Art	Dance
Craft	Music
Graphic Design	Film
Product Design	Television
Fashion	Radio
Textiles	Interactive Media
Footwear	Animation
Publishing	Computer Games
Advertising	Photo Imaging
	Creative Writing

We have considered that the focus of activity for West Norfolk should be on:  
Creative Centre focused on

- Music
- Radio – Community
- Computer Games
- Animation
- Interactive Media

Within that embedding

- Basic Skills
- Employability Skills
- Link to Ready to Work – using developed product
- Active mentoring

Work would also reflect the Diploma aims of providing young people with practical and transferable skills that can be applied in a variety of contexts and encourage enterprise and entrepreneurship.

### **Alignment and Impact**

Maximising the impact of other services and funding opportunities is essential therefore aligning with capital and revenue investment plans in the target areas is vital. This could include the review of facilities currently taking place in the North Lynn and Fairstead area – led by KL&WN BC, linkage with the safer/stronger communities programme and opportunities for leveraging in adult skills courses, contributions from schools for excluded young people etc will be essential to support the package of investment from IIC.

### **Capital and revenue investment plan**

Phase 1 07/08. An opportunity exists to 'fast track' some capital investment in the area in the order of £1m. Initial discussions would support investment in a creative centre attached to the Discovery Centre, Young peoples centre attached to the Fermoy Centre focused on Young People that have been through the criminal justice system. In addition provision for Adult skills could be made in the Healthy Living Centre.

08/09 Identify revenue/ matching contributions to deliver embedded skills for life training or other identified support to overcome personal barriers into learning or employment. (This should link into the liC Skills for life project and the West Norfolk learning catalysts programme and become the next step on the learning pathway where appropriate).

Phase 2 08/11 timing to be determined, significant capital investment in multi functional facility focused on pre-neet activity to also support family learning across key sector or industry specialisms. It is expected these would be in the Fairstead or other identified area that is accessible to those communities most in need. It will be essential to also identify where mainstream resources can be placed to support the sustainable delivery of these activities.

Phase 3 09/12? Capital investment linked to the re-location of COWA to develop small start-up business incubator units (similar to those in the Alchemy Centre at Gt Yarmouth College). Precise activity to be developed and defined during lead in period. This needs to compliment the development of proposed enterprise centre in the Borough.

### **Revenue Investment**

Critical to the Capital investment will be securing revenue streams that can sustain the buildings and provide the training and curriculum required for the identified target groups.

At this stage only options have been considered and detailed discussions need to take place with potential funders. liC can provide some initial funding but each premise will require a business plan that demonstrates support and sustainability. Potential funding areas are:

- Investing in Communities
- Safer Stronger Communities
- COWA
- Contractors Job Centre Plus
- Adult Ed
- ESF delivers eg Carter and Carter
- LSC? ESF, NEET contract
- Children's Services
- Schools
- Programme led pathway providers
- Probation and other criminal justice services
- Adult Social services

Clearly there is a substantial amount of work required to deliver the approach and bring some of these schemes to fruition. The LSP are therefore asked to endorse the approach for this part of the skills activity and the indicative investment plan.

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