

The Sustainable Community

Strategy for Halton

2011 - 2016

Mid-year Progress Report

01st April – 30th Sept 2011









Halton Strategic **PARTNERSHIP**









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This report provides a summary of progress in relation to the achievement of targets within Halton’s Sustainable Community Strategy 2011 - 2016.

It provides both a snapshot of performance for the period 1st April 2011 to 30th September 2011 and a projection of expected levels of performance to the year-end.

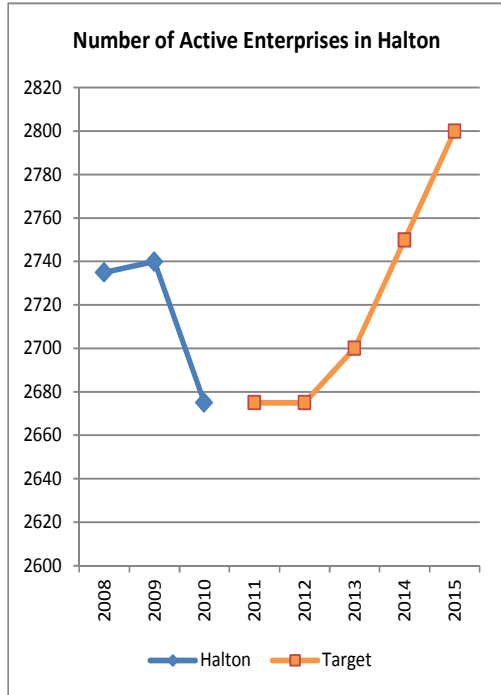
The following symbols have been used to illustrate current performance as against the 2011 target and as against performance for the same period last year.

	Target is likely to be achieved or exceeded.		Current performance is better than this time last year
	The achievement of the target is uncertain at this stage		Current performance is the same as this time last year
	Target is highly unlikely to be / will not be achieved.		Current performance is worse than this time last year

Page	Ref	Descriptor	2011 / 12 Target	Direction of travel
4	ELS 1	Increase the number of active enterprises within the Borough (NEW 2011)	Data Available Qtr 4	N/A
6	ELS 2	Increase the proportion of business diversity (NEW 2011)	Data Available Qtr 4	N/A
8	ELS 3	Increase the number of people classed as self-employed (NEW 2011)		
9	ELS 4	Reduce the proportion of people with no qualifications	Data Available Qtr 4	N/A
10	ELS 5	Increase the percentage of people achieving NVQ Level 4 and above (Revised NI 165)	Data Available Qtr 4	N/A
11	ELS 6	Increase the percentage of adults using a library (NI 9)	Placeholder 2012/13	N/A
12	ELS 7	Reduce the percentage of people registered unemployed and seeking employment (JSA claimants) (NI 152)		
14	ELS 8	Reduce the percentage of the working age population claiming out of work benefits (Revised measure)		
16	ELS 9	Increase the gross weekly earnings by residents (NI166)		
17	ELS 10	Increase the number of residents accessing welfare rights/ debt advice at a casework level (Local Measure) a) Debt b) Welfare Rights	N/A	N/A

SCS / ELS1 Increase the number of active enterprises within the Borough (New measure)

	2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Target	2011/12 Qtr 2	2011/12 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
	2675	2675	N/A		Data Available Qtr 4	N/A
Data Commentary:						
Information from: (table B1.1) http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/bus-register/uk-business/2010/uk-business--activity--size-and-location.pdf (2010) and Nomis website 2008 & 2009 data						
Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed.						
Performance Commentary:						
Data will not be updated and thus reported until Quarter 4 2011/12.						



Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

The Council’s Business Development Team (BDT) deliver a number of core functions intended to help companies based in the Borough to expand and to encourage new businesses to relocate to Halton. These include;

- The management of all indigenous company expansion projects and inward investment projects which are specific to the Borough of Halton
- The management of the Council’s relationships with external providers of business support services, for example UK Trade and Investment, The Mersey Partnership, Halton Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise and private sector business support professionals (commercial property agents, developers, intermediaries etc) to ensure that the business community in Halton has access to comprehensive, flexible and relevant business support. Increasingly the BDT will work with a growing number of private sector organisations who have successfully tendered for business support contracts from central government
- The maintenance of a comprehensive database of all land and commercial property currently available in the Borough and the delivery of a free commercial property finding service to both inward investing companies and indigenous businesses wishing to grow and expand.
- The maintenance of a comprehensive database of all businesses in Halton and the dissemination of information concerning business support initiatives to the business community
- The delivery of the Business Improvement District (BID) Programme at Astmoor and Halebank Industrial Estates and support of the Widnes Waterfront Business Group (non-BID)
- Promotion of the Visitor Economy in Halton.

Recent initiatives include;

- Marketing

In the third quarter 2011 the BDT have undertaken three specific marketing campaigns targeting different sectors of the business community;

- Runcorn Station Gateway/Liverpool John Lennon Airport (LJLA) Campaign
- Intermediaries Campaign
- Facilities for Business Start Up Campaign

- Better management of databases/enquiries

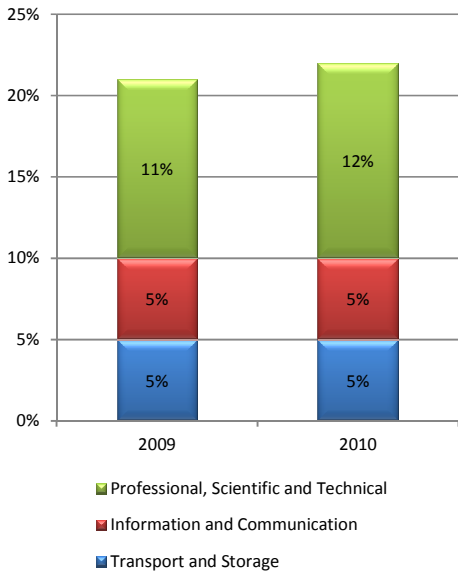
In order to maximise the value of individual enquires the BDT have initiated a weekly review of all web based commercial property enquiries. This involves the production of a weekly report and a proactive follow up to ensure that, if the web search hasn't generated any suitable commercial property matches, the individual company is aware of all alternative opportunities. The follow up will also seek to ascertain any other business support issues which the Council and partners can satisfy. On a day to day basis, the BDT continue to respond to all commercial property enquiries within twenty four hours and a review of all thirteen employment areas in Halton is underway to ensure that the property database captures all available commercial space in the Borough. The maintenance of a comprehensive database of local businesses continues to underpin the work of both the BDT and other departments of the Council. For example, the Mersey Gateway Team utilise both the company and property databases to manage the relocation of companies affected by the construction of the new bridge

- Activities to Support Companies

- The continual review, evaluation and improvement of the inward investment web site www.runcorn-widnes.com to ensure the content is relevant to the needs of business.
- Increasing use of new media to communicate with the business community, for example RSS newsfeeds, the use of social media, specifically Twitter, (<http://twitter.com/runcornwidnes>) and the production of a monthly e-shot to business
- The production of Halton Business Support Guide , a simple and straightforward guide to the range and type of business support currently available in the Borough of Halton. The guide provides information and up to date contact details about a range of business support initiatives including funding, innovation, resource efficiency, recruitment, training, starting your own business etc. The guide www.halton.gov.uk/property/support.asp is updated regularly to ensure that the business community in Halton has access to the most relevant and up to date business critical information.
- A partnership between the Council, Halton Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise and Google to bring a 'Google Juice Bar' to the Borough. Google are currently rolling out a programme throughout the Liverpool City Region to enable the business community to fully harness the potential of the internet. The first 'Google' Juice Bar event was held at The Heath Business and Technical Park on Monday 21 November. The event allowed twenty four local companies to have one to one sessions with representatives from Google. Google felt the event was a success and, therefore, a proposal has been put forward to hold two further 'Juice Bars' in the Borough together with a larger event in 2012.

SCS / ELS2 Increase the proportion of business diversity in the following sectors: (New Measure)

- Knowledge / Economy,
- Super port
- Low Carbon/ green
- Visitor Economy



2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Target	2011/12 Qtr 2	2011/12 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
22%	23%	N/A		Data Available Qtr 4	N/A

Data Commentary:

The measure is in line with the Liverpool City Region priority agreed sectors for growth.

Standard categories are used to classify businesses, which enables diversity of business within the local area to be measured. These particular categories have been chosen as areas of focus for growth and as representative of the four larger sectors within the local area. The following standard categories have been chosen as a proxy for these priorities:

- Professional, Scientific and Technical
- Information and Communication
- Transport and Storage

Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed.

Performance Commentary:

Data will not be updated and thus reported until Quarter 4 2011/12.

Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

Knowledge / Economy

The Business Development Team (BDT) work across the Authority and with external partners to develop the science, technology and advanced manufacturing (STAM) sector locally. Specifically, the BDT work with colleagues from the Employment, Learning and Skills Team to address the latent need for skilled and competent employees within the sector locally. A study has recently been completed by Peat Associates who interviewed 120 of the 210 STAM businesses in Halton to ascertain their present and future skills requirement. The information from the PEAT and other studies will be used to influence the Further Education sector to modify their curriculum in order to ensure that local young people are able to access the training they need in order to gain

employment in the STAM sector.

The BDT have also developed a suite of web resources to promote science business investment and growth;

- www.wheresciencesucceeds.co.uk to provide an information resource for businesses in the science, technology and advanced manufacturing sector
- www.scipodonline.co.uk to enthuse young people about science
- www.sciencehalton.com to provide young people and careers professionals with an online 'careers route way' illustrating available support, opportunities and useful courses and qualifications

The BDT have also made numerous presentations to local schools and colleges about careers in science and technology, worked with Careers Academies UK to promote the development of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) Career Academies in Halton at, for example, St Chad's Catholic and Church of England High School and supported Bankfield School's five Primary feeder schools to obtain PSQM (Primary Science Quality Mark).

Super Port

The BDT work closely with the SuperPort Sector Manager from TMP to provide detailed and up to date information about sites and properties within the Borough of Halton which compliment the wider LCR SuperPort portfolio of sites. The BDT also work with colleagues from Major Project and the Employment, Learning and Skills Teams to facilitate the development of 3MG and associated sites and work closely with specific inward investing companies within the logistic sector who want to locate to Halton. Recent successes include Downton Distribution who brought 200 new jobs to the Borough.

Low Carbon/ Green

The Business Improvement District or BID programme at Astmoor and Halebank industrial estates has introduced numerous energy efficiency measures, for example an estate wide recycling team. The Business Parks Manager is also working with a number of agencies, for example Enviolink, and the major utilities provides, particularly e.on and Scottish Power, to bring forward Smart Grid, micro-generation and PV technologies at Astmoor and Halebank

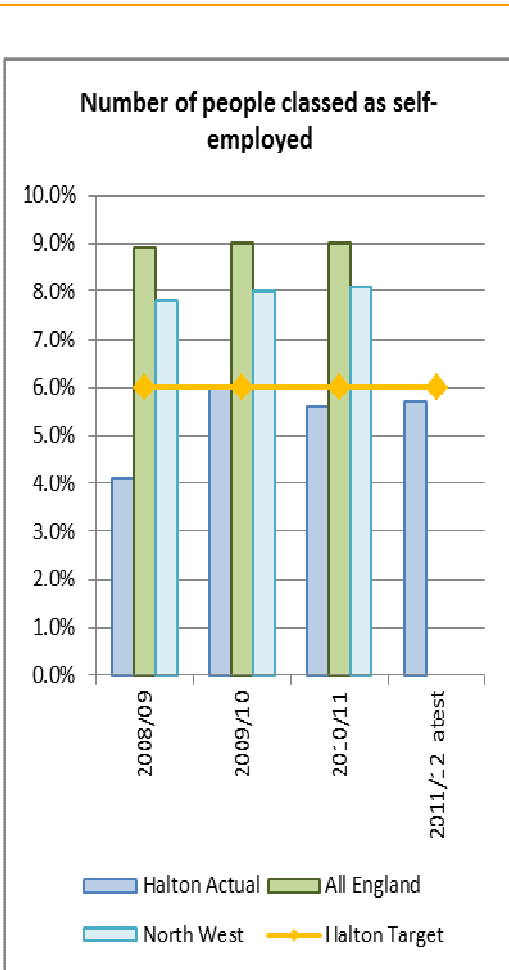
Visitor Economy

The BDT supports the visitor economy in Halton through the management of the Tourism Business Network which brings together representatives from the Borough's hotels and visitor attractions to share information and develop activities of mutual benefit, the management of the web site www.visithalton.com, tourism blogs and four public information kiosks across the Borough. The 'Visit Halton' web site is currently benefiting from a major upgrade funded by the Borough Council and The Mersey Partnership and the management, in partnership with Halton Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise, of the annual Halton Business and Tourism Awards. The 2012 awards will be held on Friday 30 March and will benefit from sponsorship from Virgin Trains, Mexichem, Selwyns Travel, Reel Cinemas, ABB, INEOS Chlor Vinals, Prologis and Medicash.

There are action plans in place to maximise the benefit to the visitor economy of the construction phase of the New Mersey Gateway and Widnes Viking's first season in Super League.

In addition there are Heritage Open Days and Great Days Out events facilitated by the Business Development Team.

SCS / ELS3 Increase the number of people classed as self-employed (New measure)



2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Target	2011/12 Qtr 2	2011/12 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
5.6%	6.0%	5.7% (July 10 to June 11)			

Data Commentary:

To show that the authority is supporting entrepreneurship by showing how much Halton has increased the number of people classed as self-employed.

Source NOMIS: % self-employed of those aged 16-64.

Self-employed information for the borough is available from the NOMIS website via the annual Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES). This measure is reported between September and December for the previous year.

Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed.

Performance Commentary:

During April and September 2011, the Division supported 39 new Business Start ups.

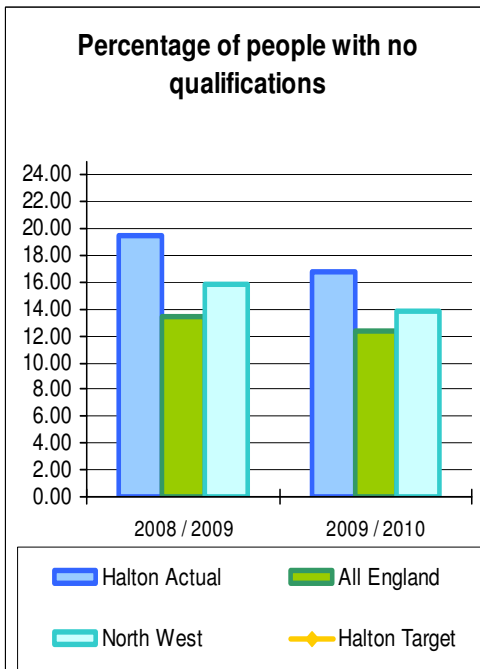
Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

From April 2011 the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) Scheme was introduced. This scheme is available to Job Centre Plus customers aged 25 years and over who have been claiming JSA for between 6-12 months and who move into employment with an allowance of £65 per week for 26 weeks, £32.50 for the following two weeks. Those new businesses that remain trading after 52 weeks will be able to access a low interest loan to be repaid in a period of 3 years. Blue Orchid has won the NEA contract covering Halton and will work closely with Enterprising Halton to support local people with starting their own business.

A restructure planned for the Employment, Learning & Skills Division February/March 2012 will see an increase in Enterprise support (2 members of staff compared to the current 1) and it is expected that this additional resource will impact positively on the numbers of new self employed starts in the borough.

In addition limited business start-up grants are available through Halton Borough Council.

SCS / ELS4 Reduce the proportion of people with no qualifications.



2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Target	2011/12 Qtr 2	2011/12 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
12.8% (Jan to Dec 2010)	12.0%	N/A		Data Available Qtr 4	N/A

Data Commentary:

To show that Halton is fostering a culture where learning is valued this indicator would assist by showing the number of residents without any qualifications decreasing.

Source: ONS annual population survey (latest survey 2010)

% is a proportion of resident population of area aged 16-64

Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed. Performance is reported annually in arrears.

Performance Commentary:

During April and September 2011, The Employment, Learning & Skills Division supported in the achievement of 47 Skills for Life qualification. Data will not be updated and thus reported until Quarter 4 2011/12.

Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

There is currently funding in place to support those unemployed to attend training and increase their skills, of which those long term unemployed are most likely to have no qualification. Therefore target to reduce to level below that of England average given the significant improvement already seen over the past three years.

During Q3 and Q4 the Division has worked closely with Tesco Stores Limited in its recruitment to the new Tesco Extra Store planned to open in Widnes in Q4 (March 2012). Part of this partnership involved hundreds of local unemployed people undertaking skills for life assessments. Many of those individuals wishing to do so will be supported to achieve literacy and numeracy qualifications and this will have a positive impact on reducing the numbers of individuals with no qualifications.

Additionally, the Division has submitted an invitation to tender (ITT) for the Skills Funding Agency Skills for the Unemployed contract (January 2012). Should this be successful, additional funding to support individuals with literacy, numeracy and employability qualifications will be made available. Outcome of the ITT will be known in Q4.

SCS / ELS5 Increase the percentage of people achieving NVQ Level 4 and above (Revised NI 165)

	2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Target	2011/12 Qtr 2	2011/12 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel																				
<p>Percentage of people achieving NVQ level 4 and above</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Data for Percentage of people achieving NVQ level 4 and above</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Halton Actual</th> <th>All England</th> <th>North West</th> <th>Halton Target</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2008/2009</td> <td>18.0</td> <td>28.5</td> <td>25.0</td> <td>22.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2009/2010</td> <td>18.0</td> <td>29.5</td> <td>26.5</td> <td>22.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2010/2011</td> <td>21.3</td> <td>31.0</td> <td>28.5</td> <td>22.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Halton Actual	All England	North West	Halton Target	2008/2009	18.0	28.5	25.0	22.0	2009/2010	18.0	29.5	26.5	22.0	2010/2011	21.3	31.0	28.5	22.0	21.3% (Jan to Dec 2010)	22.0%	N/A		Data Available Qtr 4	N/A
Year	Halton Actual	All England	North West	Halton Target																						
2008/2009	18.0	28.5	25.0	22.0																						
2009/2010	18.0	29.5	26.5	22.0																						
2010/2011	21.3	31.0	28.5	22.0																						
Data Commentary:																										
<p>Showing the number of people achieving NVQ Level 4 and above qualifications show that residents within the borough are reaching a high level of educational attainment. NVQ4 equivalent and above: e.g. HND, Degree and Higher Degree level qualifications or equivalent</p> <p>Source: ONS annual population survey</p> <p>% is a proportion of resident population of area aged 16-64</p> <p>Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed. Performance is reported annually in arrears.</p>																										
Performance Commentary:																										
Data will not be updated and thus reported until Quarter 4 2011/12.																										

Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

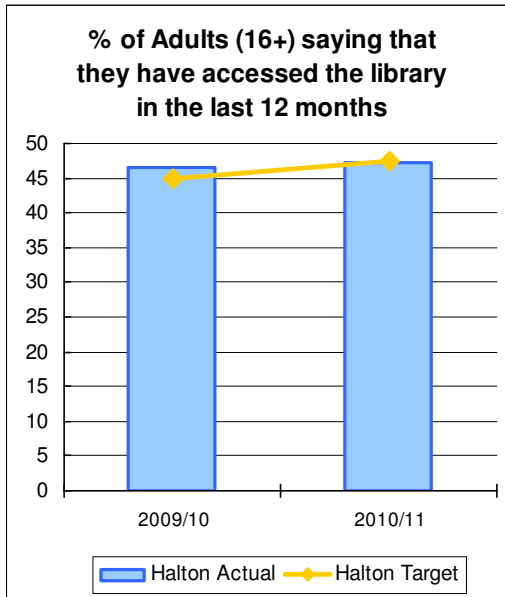
There is a current emphasis on high level apprenticeships driven from central government. Research underway to determine what our local employers require in order to influence local delivery of appropriate level 4 qualifications.

Growth not expected to be significant for first few years due to time taken to achieve level 4.

Target has been set to narrow the gap between Halton and the North West average over the five year period based on current funding levels and initiatives in place.

A growth employment area for Halton is within the Knowledge Economy (Science, Technology & Advanced Manufacturing - STAM). During Q3, a piece of research was commissioned to explore the future employment opportunities within STAM businesses in Halton and to identify any gaps in provision. During Q4 the outcomes from the research will be shared with partners. Should there be specific gaps at level 4, it is hoped new provision can be developed (in particular by Riverside College Halton) to meet the employment requirements and ensure local people can be up skilled to obtain employment requiring higher level qualifications. Further details will be available in Q4 return.

SCS / ELS6 Increase the percentage of adults using a library (NI 9)



2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Target	2011/12 Qtr 2	2011/12 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
47.3	-	N/A		Placeholder 2012/13	N/A

Data Commentary:



CIPFA PLUS Survey, a public library user survey, will be undertaken in Autumn 2012 and then every three years. Data from this will be used to provide data around uptake of library services.

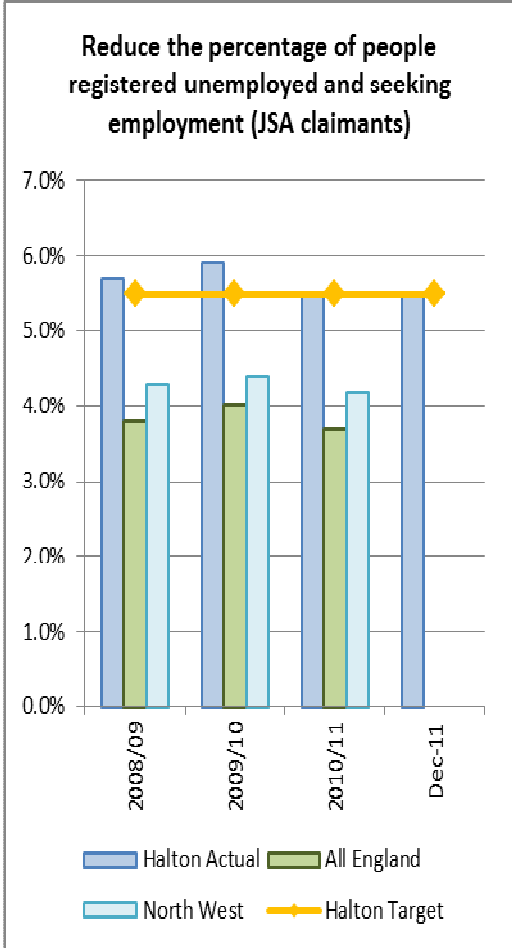
Performance Commentary:

No targets to be set against this data as the data source is no longer available. Performance will be reported first in 2013 and then again in 2016 and therefore this is a placeholder measure where the target will be to improve performance from 2012 to 2015.

Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

SCS / ELS7 Reduce the percentage of people registered unemployed and seeking employment (JSA claimants) NI 152

2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Target	2011/12 Qtr 2	2011/12 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
5.5% (March 2011)	5.5% (March 2012)	5.5% (December 2011)			



Data Commentary:

JSA claimant count records the number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) and National Insurance credits at Jobcentre Plus local offices. People claiming JSA must declare that they are out of work, capable of, available for and actively seeking work during the week in which the claim is made.

The percentage figures express the number of claimants resident in an area as a percentage of the population aged 16-64 resident in that area. Data is available one month in arrears.

Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed.

JSA claimant count for unemployed Halton residents was 4242 at December 2011 with 1440 being in the 18-24 youth category.

Performance Commentary:

Whilst unemployment figures remain fairly static, in past the past 12-months we have seen a sharp rise in the number of vacancies being advertised with an increase of 62.9% in Dec 2011 compared to Dec 2010 in Halton.

Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

The Governments 'Get Britain Working' measures have seen an increase in customers accessing work experience leading to job opportunities, volunteering opportunities, New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) to support those wishing to go into self-employment.

There are currently 8 Work Clubs operating in Halton to support residents with job search, CV's interview technique whilst looking for employment opportunities. There are also currently 5 Enterprise Clubs in Halton working to support residents looking for self-employment (as well as New Enterprise Allowance & HPIJ opportunities).

Halton are acting as a pilot area with 'Next Steps' being based in each of the offices offering immediate careers advice to customers.

JCP have worked closely with Riverside College colleagues to ensure short job focused training opportunities to support short qualifications and an insight into occupational areas.

JCP have worked with the LA to support the local transport bid, which in turn will support the local labour market through enhanced links to employers, in particular the industrial areas.

Good links have been forged with Prince's Trust looking at the youth agenda, working closely with Employment Advisers and the Work experience team to support the programme and those customers moving closer or into the Labour market.

A youth employment plan is currently being drafted to support the governments announcement of the Youth contract

JCP are working with apprenticeships (contributing to the borough Apprenticeship plan via the Apprenticeship group) and Employment Advisers are promoting apprenticeships with employers that JCP are speaking with to support residents with apprenticeship opportunities.

JCP are continually working with providers to support training requirements of the borough, a new provider is moving into a residential area to deliver training in the hub of the community focusing initially on up-skilling residents with basic skills needs.

JCP have had a lead role in recruiting unemployed customers for the new 'Hive' development and the Tesco recruitment in Widnes.

Logistics remain one of the top vacancies currently advertised in Halton. JCP have established links with the Road Haulage Association & Skills for Logistics and are working with these organisations and employers to determine requirements for recruitment including, skills, qualifications and work experience history.

JCP currently issue on a daily basis a 'Stop Press' notice to all staff to promote local recruitment, large scale recruitment, learning opportunities and additional opportunities surrounding the borough.

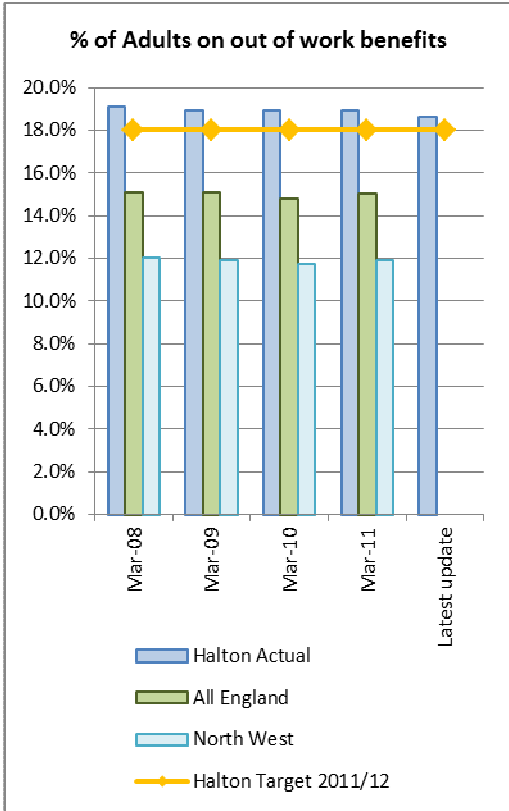
JCP are working closely with newly unemployed customers to support them with 'back to work sessions' to enable customers to have early knowledge of support, courses and up-skilling that is on offer to them borough wide.

JCP are proactive in inward investment, contacting local employers to actively promote services to support recruitment requirements.

The % of people seeking work will change with the introduction of universal credit scheduled for introduction in 2013.

SCS / ELS8 Reduce the percentage of the working age population claiming out of work benefits (Revised measure)

	2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Target	2011/12 Qtr 2	2011/12 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
	18.9% (March 2010)	18% (March 2012)	18.6% (May 2011)		?	↑
Data Commentary:						
<p>Out of work benefits includes Job seekers allowance, ESA (Incapacity Benefits), Lone parents and other income related benefits.</p> <p>Data is taken from the Department for work and Pensions claimant figures via the office of National statistics NOMIS reporting system. Data is available quarterly and is released six months in arrears.</p> <p>Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed.</p>						
Performance Commentary:						
<p>In Halton 18.6% of the working age population are claiming out of work benefits. The figure for the North West region currently stands at 14.9% and nationally at 11.8%.</p> <p>As at May 2011 there are 8190 residents claiming ESA & incapacity Benefits, of these 1850 are Lone parents</p>						



Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

JCP work closely with all the Halton Children’s Centres to support lone parent activity. Personal Advisers are currently on outreach in Widnes CC’s and this will once again roll out to Runcorn in Quarter 1 2012.

JCP have also piloted ‘Group Sessions’ in some Children’s Centres to support large recruitments. This has been well received and some lone parents have moved into training. 47 customers to date have attended and are being tracked. 23 rang who were unable to attend but required additional support that is being looked at.

Children’s Centres are in attendance at local JCP offices weekly to engage with lone parents and families to offer support required and JCP sit on the Advisory Board of the CC’s to support the Economic agenda.

IB Reassessment is currently under way and will be completed by 2014. Customers moving into ESA (Work Related Activity Group) will be assigned a named Personal Adviser who will support customers move closer to the labour market.

JCP have a Disability Employment Adviser in each site to support customers who require additional support going into employment. There are programmes such as Work Choices which supports customers with highest support needs, and helps moves them into employment.

Access to Work can support customers with equipment required to support a return to employment for customers with a disability.

The % of people seeking work will change with the introduction of universal credit scheduled for introduction in 2013.

SCS / ELS9 Increase the gross weekly earnings by residents (NI166)

<p>Gross weekly earnings of residents (£)</p>	2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Target	2011/12 Qtr 2	2011/12 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
	£443.50p	Close gap with NW average £471.20	£432.30p		✘	↓
Data Commentary:						
<p>The gross median weekly earnings of residents showing an increase would show that people are able to maximise their potential and rise out of poverty.</p> <p>Equally, there is a correlation between qualifications and skills and rates of pay. In Halton skills and qualification levels lag behind regional and national averages and, for this reason, Halton residents tend to be in the lower paid jobs</p> <p>Halton partners try to address low levels of skills through a variety of skills for life and employability activities.</p> <p>Data obtained from NOMIS. This data is available annually and will be added once published.</p> <p>Target is to close the gap to the North West average.</p>						
Performance Commentary:						
<p>The Gross median weekly earnings of residents is £501.80 for all England and £471.20 for the North West. A rising trend was noted from 2008 to 2010 showing an increase in gross weekly earnings of Halton residents.</p> <p>However, at the last data recording date, June 2011 29.9% or 16,000 of Halton people in employment worked in the public sector. There has been a reduction of 0.5% or 200 people working in the public sector since December 2010. It is anticipated that this figure will reduce further. In Halton, pay rates in the public sector have been higher than in the private sector. Therefore, any further reductions in the public sector workforce numbers will have a negative impact on the borough's average earnings figures.</p>						
Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:						
<p>This measure also links to the Child Poverty Strategy. All work to raise qualification levels within Halton population and the work as a partnership to employ local people in new employment developments will assist in raising the gross weekly earnings of Halton residents.</p>						

SCS / ELS10

Maintain the number of residents accessing welfare rights/ debt advice at a casework level (Local Measure)

- a) Debt
- b) Welfare Rights

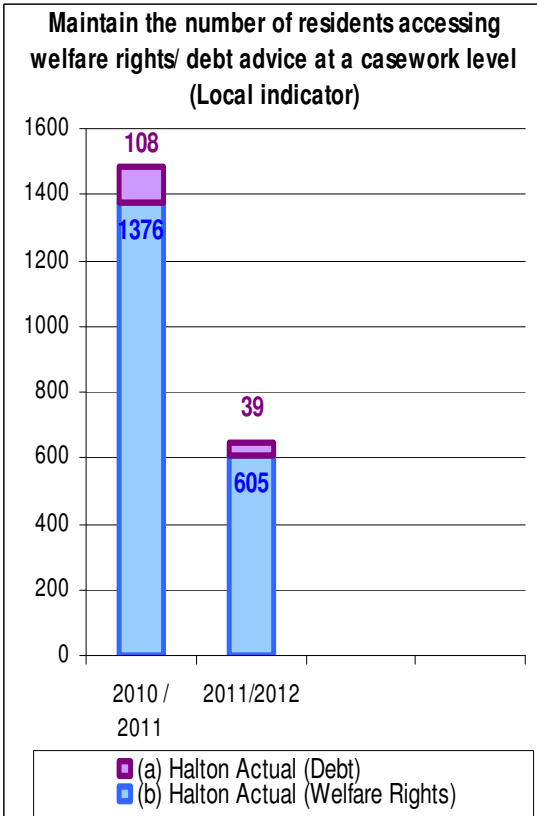
2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Target	2011/12 Qtr 2	2011/12 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
Awaiting full data	Baseline year	Awaiting full data		N/A	N/A

Data Commentary:

The number of people accessing a welfare benefits or debt advice agency and receiving a specialist casework service.

This is a numeric indicator, taken as a simple total which will reflect the level of uptake of specialist services to assist an individual to better their economic circumstances. To assist an individual to manage their income, both debt and benefits advice will be necessary and neither service in isolation is sufficient to address the needs of most individuals who need to access support. Much specialist welfare rights casework involves “in work” benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Tax Credits and income maximisation.

Target is to maintain the performance from 2011/12 through to 2015/16. Awaiting data from CAB to provide previous outturns and the Q2 position. Chart details HBC information only.



Performance Commentary:

The demand for Welfare Rights and Debt advice services remains high and all services are at capacity. The number of advisers in large part determines how many people are assisted.

There is expected to be a fall in casework figures from 2010/ 2011 to 2011/12 that will be evidenced at the end of the financial year reflecting a reduction in the number of advisers. However, it is expected that if the number of advisers is maintained then the number of local residents given specialist help will broadly stabilise. There will always be small variations reflecting the fact that cases vary in complexity.

However, we have seen an increase in demand for specialist advice linked into the welfare reform agenda. This is especially from those who are receiving Incapacity Benefit and need to be assessed by Jobcentre Plus against the harsher criteria for Employment Support Allowance. This increase is essentially for more complex casework advice.

The welfare reform agenda is radical and due to gather substantial momentum over the next 5 year period. It is predicted that the demand for complex casework will increase further in both welfare benefits and debt advice and it may be the number of specialist advisers that determine to what degree this need is met.

Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

This indicator measures the uptake of relevant advice services at a specialist level. It is necessary to draw a distinction between the provisions of advice via a leaflet, self-completed pro forma, or lower level tier assistance. This has a value but a distinction must be made between this and specialist work. This may involve as examples, financial negotiation for a client, court representation, a Debt Relief Order or appeal tribunal representation. It is not possible to gain a full picture of the advice sector with a single statistic and to be comprehensive would entail numerous performance indicators measures being measured and undue complexity. Commentary will be provided on key developments/ initiatives undertaken on a six monthly basis to provide further detail in monitoring reports.

It is therefore necessary to focus on a clear, easily measurable statistic, which avoids undue complications in definition. This statistic also largely avoids “double counting” which can easily happen with lower tier advice. Anecdotally, all specialist advice services have been working at capacity and the definition will illustrate reductions and increases in advice provision.

It is recognised that not all cases counted are equal in terms of content, but this does not matter because the indicator is measuring service access, and not being used as a method of inter-agency comparison. The statistics given have a value for comparative work within Halton, but external benchmarking has previously been found to be both complex and potentially very misleading.

This links to objective to maximise an individual’s potential to increase and manage their income, including access to appropriate, supportive advice services in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Also, the statistic provided will link into both the advice required to fulfil obligations under the Child Poverty Strategy.

Data provided above is from David Gray (HBC) to establish a baseline. Information to be supplied by Hitesh Patel (Halton CAB) for the full information.