

**REPORT TO:** Employment, Learning & Skills and  
Community Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 21 November 2016

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director –  
Enterprise, Community and Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** Economic Development

**SUBJECT:** Youth Employment Gateway project update

**WARDS:** Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide members with an overview of the Youth Employment Gateway project currently being delivered by Employment, Learning and Skills Division, including achievements to date, income and expenditure and future strategy.
- 1.2 To provide opportunities to members to raise any questions with regards to the Youth Employment Gateway project.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **3.1 Background information**

3.1.1 The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Youth Employment Gateway (YEG) project is an innovative programme for people aged between 18 and 24 years and who have been in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) or Universal Credit (UC) for between 8 weeks and 9 months. The programme provides all participants with a range of services, each aimed at moving them one step closer to their employment aspirations and ambitions.

3.1.2 Young people who fall into one or more of the categories listed below, may be referred to the programme within the 8 week claim period. However the referral will only be made if the Work Coach (Job Centre Plus) considers it to be appropriate. The referral criteria will include:

- long-term NEET
- care leavers
- ex-offenders
- has a (mental) health condition
- has learning difficulties
- lone parent

- 3.1.3 All referrals to the YEG programme must be made via Job Centre Plus. The programme is voluntary. Customers are not mandated to attend and are not be sanctioned for non-compliance.
- 3.1.4 Each of the 6 geographical areas within LCR has its own provider, delivering the YEG programme, which is delivered in 2 distinct consecutive phases:
- Phase 1 commenced 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014 for a 12 month period, which was extended to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015
  - Phase 2 commenced 1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 for a 12 month period, which has been extended to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016
- 3.1.5 The YEG programme is funded through a Cabinet Office Grant. Match funding using ESF/YEI (Youth Employment Initiative) has been secured for Phase 2 delivery.
- 3.1.6 A feature of the programme is the availability of funding to pay for goods or services that can help improve the client's employment prospects. This can include but is not limited to occupational, accredited or non-accredited training courses, work related equipment or tools, personal protective equipment (PPE) or uniforms, documents to prove identification, DBS checks or the cost of travel. However, the funding cannot be used to pay for goods or services which are already freely available to the individual, had they not been on the YEG programme e.g. courses already funded by the Skills Funding Agency.
- 3.1.7 The aim of Phase 2 is to test out the impact on individuals who have been given more control over their career progression and development. This will be achieved by allowing the young person to play a more active part in and take more responsibility for, decisions regarding the use of the funding available to them through their Personalised Budget. The young person will be able to use the Personalised Budget (average value of £500) to request the purchase of goods or services which **they** believe will: enhance their employability; support their journey into work; and/or enable them to sustain their employment.
- 3.1.8 A web application developed for young people to use during Phase 2 of the project directly supports the Personalised Budget element of the project.
- 3.1.9 Work Programme claimants are not eligible. Once a claimant is referred to the Work Programme their time on the YEG programme will end.
- 3.1.10 In September 2016 we received notification from Liverpool City Region that the YEG programme has been extended and providers are able to accept new referrals on to the programme up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016, continuing to work with participants up to 31<sup>st</sup> September 2017.

3.1.11 From January 2016 the YEG programme is incorporated into the ESF Ways to Work project.

## **3.2 YEG programme delivery**

3.2.1 Halton Borough Council's Employment, Learning and Skills Division commenced delivery of the YEG programme for Halton residents in November 2014.

3.2.2 YEG participants have access to their own personal advisor, who provides them with high quality, impartial, employment related advice and guidance. The advisor helps them to explore their personal ambitions and employment goals, as well as identifying any barriers which could hinder their progress towards employment. Customers are provided with a minimum standard of support to better prepare them for the job market, which includes:

- Direct access to a personal advisor
- A quality and fit for purpose CV
- Access to a range of current job vacancies – both local and national
- Access to Skills for Life Initial Assessment of English and maths to identify current skill level
- Offer of training to address any English, maths or IT skills that may be lacking
- Employability initial assessment using the Work Star Assessment tool
- A Better Off Calculation
- The acquisition of practical skills, tools and techniques to be able to search for job vacancies and complete on line applications
- Enhanced interview skills
- Ongoing high quality skills support for basic employability
- A customised support package which, where necessary, includes the purchase of goods or services to help the client achieve their employment ambitions. This is agreed between the client and the advisor.
- An agreed plan of action to help the client achieve their ambitions.

3.2.3 During the initial stages of the programme, the advisor determines whether the client needs help with basic employability skills such as English, maths and IT. Where such needs are identified, the advisor discusses options with the client and where necessary, makes arrangements with a suitable training provider for the needs to be addressed. If the particular needs of an individual are more specialised than the advisor is able to address e.g. mental health, debt, arrangements are made for the client to be supported by an organisation specialising in that particular area. If such support isn't available or immediately forthcoming, the service could be paid for by the programme.

3.2.4 Working with the Advisor, individuals complete a Work Star assessment during the initial registration appointment. The Work Star for work and learning is one of a suite of Outcome Stars and is designed to be used by adults out of work or returning to the workplace. The Work Star is a holistic tool and covers seven key areas:

1. Challenges
2. Job specific skills
3. Stability
4. Job search skills
5. Basic skills
6. Aspiration and motivation
7. Social skills for work

The Work Star is underpinned by a five-stage model of change:

- Not thinking about work
- Thinking about work
- Making progress
- Work-ready with support
- Self-reliance

Advisors provide advice, guidance and support as each individual progresses from their initial starting point along their journey of change.

3.2.5 The Division has many years' experience of providing support to people with a range of barriers which may hinder the individual's chance of gaining employment; of working collaboratively with other organisations so as to address the often many and complex needs of people seeking employment; and has good links with a wide range of employers. YEG advisors are suitably qualified with an excellent working knowledge of their particular area and the local people.

3.2.6 Two funding models have been implemented:

- During Phase 1 a customised budget approach was implemented. The client expenditure was agreed between the advisor and customer. At the outset of the YEG programme a nominal amount of £500 was allocated to each participant via an individualised budget.

- During Phase 2 a personalised budget approach is used and individuals are initially allocated £500. The individual is able to log on to the YEG website via u-explore.com to add items of expenditure (goods and services) to their wish list, which is discussed with the advisor. An appeals procedure is in place for participants who do not agree with a decision to decline a request.
- Additionally, when a client secures employment the advisor is able to make arrangements for the personalised budget to help the individual's transition into employment e.g. initial travel costs, PPE.

3.2.7 Whilst in employment, the advisor continues to offer in-work support by providing, for example, advice on extending their period of employment, career progression or information about further training which may help with their career development and which can be purchased from the individual's personalised budget.

### 3.3 Performance and achievement

3.3.1 Contract delivery in Halton commenced in November 2014. Performance is comprehensively managed and monitored through a range of internal and external measures.

3.3.2 Performance and achievement:

#### **Phase 1 (November 2014 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016)**

- 212 customers referred customers November 2014 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015
- 171 customers started on programme November 2014 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015
- 113 customers have been supported into employment (*1<sup>st</sup> job starts only*) November 2014 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016
- 50 customers reached 26 week sustained employment
- The outcome reporting period ends on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016

Phase 1 (17/11/14 – 30/09/16)	Actual	Target	Overall Variance
Referrals	212	n/a	n/a
Starts	171	93	+78
Jobs	113	47	+66
Sustained jobs 13 weeks	72	n/a	n/a
Sustained jobs 26 weeks	50	33	+17
Client Customised Expenditure	£23,346	£46,500	-£23,154
Start to Job Outcome Rate Actual	66%	50%	+16%
Start to Job Outcome rate Contracted	122%	50%	+72%

## Phase 2 (1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017)

- 241 customers referred customers (1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016)
- 217 customers started on programme (1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016)
- 82 customers have been supported into employment (*1<sup>st</sup> job starts only*) (1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 – 31<sup>st</sup> September 2016)
- 9 customers have reached 26 week sustained employment (1<sup>st</sup> October 2015 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016)
- The outcome reporting period ends on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017

Phase 2 (01/10/15 – 30/09/17)	Actual to 30/09/16	Target	Variance 30/09/16
Referrals	142	n/a	n/a
Starts	217	201	+16
Jobs	82	100	-18
Sustained jobs 13 weeks	46	n/a	n/a
Sustained jobs 26 weeks	9	70	-61
Client Customised Expenditure	£36,743	£100,500	-£63,757
Start to Job Outcome Rate Actual	38%	50%	-12%
Start to Job Outcome rate Contracted	41%	50%	-9%

### 3.4 Income and Expenditure

- 3.4.1. Income is received through grant payment from Liverpool City Region which is devolved from the Cabinet Office.
- 3.4.2 Expenditure is closely monitored, through a combination of internal and external mechanisms, to ensure that contracts are delivered efficiently.
- 3.4.3 Where possible, access to other available services and/or funding streams are maximised to support the delivery of the YEG Programme. YEG customers have access to the range of services and valuable opportunities delivered by the Employment, Learning & Skills Division at nil cost to the YEG programme.
- 3.4.4 The underspend of Phase 1 Client Expenditure was used to create 12 additional starts on programme in Phase 2 (target of 189 was increased to 201 starts on programme).
- 3.4.5 The cost of the web application used during Phase 2 has been met from the YEG grant allocation and directly supports the Personalised Budget element of the project.
- 3.4.6 External monitoring
- A Funding Compliance Visit took place on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016. The purpose of the visit was to ensure the YEG programme was being delivered in line with the expectations of the funder; that the

programme was being delivered in a consistent manner across all 6 geographical areas within LCR; and that there was sufficient evidence to support outcomes or expenditure made against the client. It was reported that the records for Halton participants were generally in very good order. The performance rating awarded was Green – no concerns (within 10% of profile).

- A YEG Financial Inspection was completed by the LCR team on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2016 to specifically inspect client expenditure and personalised budgets. It was reported that overall the files for Halton participants were very comprehensive and those that were examined contained enough information to show that the personalised budget is being managed in accordance with the personalised budget framework. The performance rating awarded was Green – no concerns (within 10% of profile).
- The next YEG Funding Compliance Visit will take place on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2016.

### **3.5 Key Successes**

- 3.5.1 At the end of October 2016 Halton continued to exceed the minimum targets for each indicator (starts on programme, jobs and 26 week sustained employment) in Phase 1 of the YEG programme.
- 3.5.2 Very good progress has been made during the first year of Phase 2. The target for customer starts on programme has been exceeded along with excellent progress towards achievement of job starts. However, the achievement of 26 week sustained job outcomes has not yet been achieved and progress towards the target will continue until 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017.
- 3.5.3 Achievement of Green rating (no concern) on Funding Compliance Monitoring and Inspection visits in 2016.
- 3.5.4 Good use of YEG website during Phase 2 – by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016 232 (individuals and staff members) opened a YEG website account.

### **3.6 Key issues**

- 3.6.1 Progress towards the target for Phase 2 26 week sustained job outcomes has been slow. However, an increase in the achievement of sustained job outcomes is expected from October 2016. Continuation of close monitoring of progress will identify key actions to ensure all individuals are supported to achieve sustainability in work.

### **3.7 Evaluation**

- 3.7.1 An independent evaluation of the project is being carried out to compare and contrast Phase 1 and Phase 2 to learn the lessons from

the two approaches with the view to influencing the future delivery of these types of programmes.

3.7.2 Three sets of participation data have been submitted to the LCR team for the purpose of external evaluation during Phase 1 and Phase 2. One final data set will be submitted before the end of the project.

3.7.3 Advisors and individuals have participated in external evaluation activities, which included telephone surveys and group sessions.

### **3.8 Concluding comments**

3.8.1 Overall performance has been exceeded in all aspects of Phase 1 and good progress is being achieved in Phase 2.

3.8.2 Quality and compliance standards have been met, evidenced by the achievement of green ratings.

3.8.3 Partnership working between Halton Borough Council and Halton Employment Partnership organisations is valued highly.

## **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Whilst the YEG programme will end in September 2017, those residents who fit YEG eligibility will still be able to access the ESF Ways to Work project.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

Some YEG customers also engage with the 14-19 NEET team and the 2 projects complement each other in supporting local residents with a range of issues.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The achievements that have come out of the Youth Employment Gateway delivered by Halton Borough Council by getting so many people into work is a very positive outcome for the local economy. Many of the individuals that have accessed the programme have also gained vital maths, English and employability skills along the way, in addition to sector specific qualifications such as CSCS cards, SIA licences, driving licences, etc.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

None



6.4 **A Safer Halton**  
None

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**  
None

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 As can be seen in the main body of the report, the management of the YEG programme has been effective and close monitoring, both internal and external, ensure any risks identified are carefully mitigated, with clear action plans in place to address any performance, quality and compliance factors.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**  
None

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.