

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Tees Valley Employability Framework (TVEF) Update

Work on the Employability Framework (TVEF) has continued to make progress using both the Heads of Economic Development and Economic Development Officers' meetings as sounding boards /discussion groups for our activities. A formal meeting of the Steering Group and Single Programme Project Board will take place in the near future. We are also planning an event aimed at Employability partners (at a more practitioner level) for the New Year.

Single Programme Employability Projects

Workstream 1 - The New Futures Project has begun with Hartlepool BC leading the project which covers the whole of Tees Valley. Around 50 individuals have so far taken up employment and training under the scheme, which, whilst still having a predominance for trades within the construction sector, is now branching out to cover a much broader spectrum of occupations.

Workstream 2 – Sector Gateways - The Tourism /hospitality /retail activities are gathering momentum, particularly in the Hartlepool area in anticipation of the Tall Ships Race next year, however we have had unavoidable delays in recruiting staff for the other sector roles. However this is now much more promising with applications in from candidates for the two vacant posts.

Workstream 3A – Inwork support and aftercare – We have now received approval from One North East to change our method of delivery to an in-house model with Hartlepool Borough Council acting as managers of a project delivering across all five boroughs in the same way that they do for 'New Futures'. Whilst we are still formalising the detail, this should nevertheless allow us to move into delivery stage much more quickly and begin offering the service to support SMEs and their employees early in the New Year. The service will offer 'welfare officer' type services to those employees who's longer term employability could be at risk through ill health, care responsibilities, debt etc.

Workstream 3B – Darlington Into Work Service. We are pleased to announce that Morrisons' Trust have been successful in securing the contract for this service to provide mentoring and support to move individuals from the Darlington area into sustainable employment. Morrisons' Trust has an excellent track record in this field of support so we look forward to some excellent results.

Workstream 4 -Infrastructure – I am pleased to say that we have now appointed a Project Manager to co-ordinate performance delivery of all the above projects and ensure that we reach and hopefully exceed our targets. In addition, we have also appointed a Data Mmnt Officer to support and co-ordinate the development of a new 'Shared Data Framework' for employment and skills activities across Tees Valley.

Future Jobs Fund

All five Local Authorities have now received allocations under Future Jobs Fund and are busy taking referrals from Jobcentre Plus. There are still a few minor teething troubles which colleagues are working through together with Jobcentre Plus, via a Tees Valley joint group. We have been asked to consider putting forward a second application, for additional places, but this time as a Tees Valley –wide bid. This will form the basis of discussions with the Local Authorities who may wish to consider creating additional FJF places.

Fit For Work Service Pilots

Unfortunately despite being invited for interview as a reserve, we were not successful in securing a FFWS pilot for Tees Valley or anywhere else in the North East. The nearest pilot will be in Wakefield. It is clear from the list of 10 successful schemes, which vary in size (one covers the whole of Scotland) that many had been already established projects which were given an additional boost through this fund and now have a formal role as a national pilot.

We will be looking for further opportunities to work together with health partners in this way in the future, and are currently looking at the recently announced Health Work and Well-being Challenge Fund grant scheme funded by the Department for Work and Pensions as another possible funding opportunity. For more information visit www.workingforhealth.gov.uk/challengefund

High Level Skills Report

Work to develop a body of evidence in the form of the views and needs of employers in respect of the high level skills essential for their workforce, has been undertaken on our behalf by Teesside University. Dr Ruth Helyer and Dionne Lee expect to finish their report very shortly and will be presenting an outline of their findings at the Business Case E&S event on 2nd December.

Work and Skills Plans

We are expecting high level guidance out from DWP shortly regarding Work and Skills Plans, which are due for completion by 31st March 2010. We are working closely with the relevant Agencies to ensure that our views are included within the development of more detailed guidance which is due out by the end of January.

Developing the Tees Valley Employment and Skills MAA

The issue of devolution of Government funding for employment and skills activities has continued to form a topic for discussion and Shared Intelligence Ltd have now met with most of the individual Local Authorities to help to clarify issues. This will also form a theme for the Business Case Event for Employment and Skills, set for 2nd December. Informal discussions with both DWP and BIS are also continuing.

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