

18 November 2021

Employment and Skills Support

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Councillor Andrew – Regeneration
Councillor Towe - Education and Skills

1. Aim

To update members on the current Employment and Skills Support and how the programmes delivered contribute to the Corporate Plan priorities and the positive outcomes secured for our customers from each of our employability programmes.

2. Recommendations

Members to note the current Employment and Skills Support services and the level of dependency on grant funded programmes, and consider whether to build more sustainable delivery models as a result of the successful delivery of employability programmes and performance highlighted in the report. To seek consent to commence planning for future resource to sustain services beyond grant end dates

3. Report detail – know

3.1 The Employment and Skills service contributes to the **Corporate Plan Priorities:**

Economic Growth for all people, communities and businesses. This contributes towards the outcomes of:

- *Creating an environment where business invests and everyone who wants a job can access one.*
- *Education, training and skills enable people to fulfil their personal development.*

People have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities. This contributes to the outcomes of:

- *People live a good quality of life and feel that they belong.*
- *People know what makes them healthy and they are encouraged to get support when they need it.*

3.2 Walsall has a working age population (16-64 year olds) of 174,300. The annual population survey shows approximately 16,900 (9%) of the adult population have no qualifications (compared to regional average of 8.3%) and only 27% of the working age hold a NVQ Level 4 (compared to regional average of 37%).

3.3 The economic consequences of the pandemic has not fallen equally on all communities, it has exposed existing vulnerabilities and inequalities of our

residents. The onset of the pandemic has also seen unemployment climb to levels that were not seen during the 2008 recession. There are now 12,640 claimants:

2,555 claimants are aged 16-24

7,250 claimants are aged 25-49

2,840 claimants are aged 50+

- 3.4 A total of 7,100 people were on furlough in July 2021, however there has not been a noted increase in the claimant count since furlough ended on 30th September. Despite the high volumes of claimants there is still a mismatch between the aspirations of those on the claimant count vs the types of unique job postings for Walsall (5,500 postings in April 2021). This is coupled with evidence showing major labour shortages in haulage, logistics, health social care and hospitality sectors despite the availability of those people who are unemployed.
- 3.5 The strategic objective of the Employment & Skills team is to improve economic growth in the borough through collaborative working with employers, partner organisations and training providers. Our core aim is to ensure that every Walsall resident has the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential. The team achieves this by providing people access to employability support that progresses people to local skills provision, good quality jobs and sustainable careers.
- 3.6 Our key focus is to understand the barriers faced by our unemployed residents and to support to address these through partnership working and signposting to key specialist services ie health, housing, debt and training. Our services and support is generally targeted at people of working age who are inactive and not in employment, education or training, but this is not exclusive and those who are at risk of becoming redundant or made redundant, recently exiting furlough and those looking for a career change through re-skilling are also eligible for support.
- 3.7 The services we offer are delivered under a range of employability programmes which all sit under the umbrella of the Walsall Works programme. We use all forms of communication and channels to engage eligible clients including face to face support delivered by our employment advisors based in our town centre hubs, community venues and partner organisation. We also deliver virtual employability support through telephone, email and via our website www.walsallworks.com. Our social media channels ie youtube, linkedin, facebook, Instagram, twitter offer a self-service for clients who are looking for tips and tools to improve their employment chances, access training and promote vacancies in the local labour market. We host the largest jobs fair in the regional twice per annum which has been known to attract 100 employer exhibitors who interface with 1000+ people.
- 3.8 Through our employer engagement function we also offer a bespoke job brokerage service which matches job vacancies to clients registered to our programmes. We have actively engaged 1200 employers to bring forward opportunities and we work closely with key employers and strategic partners to account manage larger recruitments for strategic employers ie HS2, Balfour Beatty Vinci, Midland Metro Alliance, RAC, Commonwealth Games as well as large employers based in the Walsall borough such as AF Blakemores and Poundlands.
- 3.9 An overview of our programmes is below, with Walsall Works being the overarching umbrella programme and our team brand name.

Walsall Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council funded initiative designed to support local people of working age • Supports residents to improve employability, help to find jobs, apprenticeships, access training and work placements • Work with local employers to understand the demands of the local labour market and to bring forward vacancies for local people • Since April 2012, 12,469 people supported with 5,199 into positive outcome • Since April 2021, 434 positive outcomes of which 195 were into jobs
BC Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact is designed to support young people aged 16-29 year old who are NEET (not in education, employment or training) • Bespoke tailored service providing information advice and guidance • Intensive 1 to 1 personalised support delivered by an IAG qualified Advisors • Since Aug 2016, 4,617 young people enrolled with 1,377 positive outcomes • 392 young people are currently on programme being supported
Kickstart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered employer gateway to bring forward 150 paid work placements • Work placements for 16- 24 year olds universal benefit claimants • Employers offer a minimum of 25 hours per week for a six month period • Progression to apprenticeship and jobs within host or other employers • 80 placements have been filled within 23 employers, with a further 69 live
Restart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare to Work contract to deliver employability to working age residents who are unemployed and claiming universal benefit for 12-18 months • Support to tackle barriers that prepare participants to access employment • Profile of supporting 1500 participants into employment over four years • Go live since Aug 2021, 159 referrals resulting in 96 client starts and 2 jobs • Contract is meeting its profiles and customer service standard profiles
Information Advice and Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers guidance in four Special schools and helping make young people of school age to more empowered, employable and entrepreneurial • NEETs prevention work with vulnerable young people at risk of being NEET • Brokering real business engagement in school and helping local economic development through delivery of programmes. • Provides a focus on self-employment
Community Renewal Fund Works+ / 50+ Plus Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four of our bids shortlisted by CA, with two approved for CRF grant • The bids are partnership collaborative projects valued at £700,000, with whg and Sandwell Council to bring forward positive outcomes for local residents. • Works+ is an extension to Walsall Works and will focus on 320 economically inactive residents who reside in our top 7 deprived wards, aged 50's, those at risk or recently redundant, social housing tenants • Works+ will create 32 fully paid work placements within whg, Council and in the private sector and major contractors for residents aged 25 years old + • 50+ Hub & Spoke Partnership will enable the community and voluntary sector to actively support the progression of 200 older residents who are looking to upskill, reskill post redundancy, seeking new skills and progress to work.

3.10 A summary of the performance is set out below.

WW Outcomes - Programme Lifetime											
Outcome Type	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	Total
Walsall Works Apprenticeships (funded)	104	262	113	73	92	22	15	11	0	1	692
Walsall Works Apprenticeships (LACs)	-	-	-	-	-	4	8	1	0	0	13
People into Apprenticeships (non-funded)	-	86	91	31	19	33	31	32	18	13	341
People into employment	-	157	180	164	160	363	272	450	316	195	2062
People supported with employability skills	295	741	611	368	442	624	427	719	539	434	4766
People into accredited training	-	75	103	40	56	126	67	162	181	115	810
People in traineeships	191	159	99	40	100	44	11	28	1	8	673
People into work placements	-	-	24	14	13	25	18	27	2	2	123
People into self-employment	-	-	1	4	2	7	5	8	7	3	34
People into Kickstart Placements	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	97	111
No of Customer Contacts	-	-	504	1058	1564	1241	1205	1728	1191	1141	12469
No of job vacancies advertised	-	-	-	-	-	145	175	219	220	193	759

- 3.11 A performance dashboard for the lifetime and current year delivery of the Walsall Works programme is set out Appendix 1, this includes performance for the teams' contribution to BC Impact, Walsall Works, Restart and Kickstart programmes.
- 3.12 It is to be noted that the Walsall Works performance may not show a true reflection of our actual success as many residents who receive support will go on to securing employment but fail to inform us or provide us with the required outcome evidence. To improve this our tracking processes have become more robust this past year and this enables us to remain compliant with our grant funders.

4. Financial information

- 4.1 There is a financial implication due to the nature of the grant or funding for each employability programme, this income currently funds the entire employment and skills delivery team and this creates staffing implications for sustaining services. There is also a financial implication with the Restart programme as the staffing structure requires resourcing until such time as the programme payment by results income offsets the staffing costs and programme expenditure. These profiles are outlined in the approved Restart cabinet report in July 2021.
- 4.2 Ten staff from Childrens Service were transferred to the team in October 2020, the current Employment and Skills Team structure is made up of 28.5 FTE staff with a further 10.5 FTE staff to be recruited during 2021/22 for Restart delivery and 4 additional temporary staff for the Community Renewal Fund pilot projects.
- 4.3 The staff positions and contract end dates are set out below:-

Programme	Existing Staff Positions	End Date
Childrens Mainstream	Senior IAG Practitioner x 1 Education Business Partnership x 1 IAG Advisor x 3	Re-occurring budget
Economic Growth Programme (EGP)	Employment and Skills Manager x 1 Employment and Skills Officers x 4 Regeneration Assistant x 1.5	31.03.2023
BC Impact Programme (grant funded)	Employer Engagement Officer x 1 IAG Advisors x 5 Employment Advisors x 6 Apprentice Regeneration Asst x 1	31.07.2023
Walsall Works	Employment Advisors x 3	31.03.2023
Kickstart	Employment Advisors x 1	31.12.2021
Restart (to be recruited or transferred internally in 2021/22)	Programme Management Officer x 1 Employment Advisors x 6 Employer Engagement Officer x 1 Quality Officer x 1 In Work Support Officer x 0.5 Regeneration Assistant x 1	31.09.2023 plus option to extend to 2025

- 4.4 Wherever, possible we will consider moving staff across programmes prior to recruiting externally in order to manage the long term financial implications and to reduce any redundancy costs. However, a decision will need to be made on whether substantive posts need to be filled to mitigate any performance management issues with contracts or grant funded programmes ie Restart, Impact

5. *Reducing Inequalities*

- 5.1 Our service delivery enhances the economic circumstance of local people and businesses who participate, hence improving health and wellbeing outcomes. Being in good employment which offers a safe and secure job is better for your health than being out of work. Research provides clear evidence that that good work improves health and wellbeing across people's lives and protects against social exclusion. Conversely, unemployment is bad for health and wellbeing, as it is associated with an increased risk of mortality and morbidity.
- 5.2 The schemes aim to address and remove health related barriers through collaborative working with public private and third sectors organisations and by signposting to clients to public and national health services. For example, embedded within and funded by BC Impact are specific contracted health services for participants to access specific support ie counselling, supported employment.
- 5.3 Colleagues from Public Health are actively involved in our programme delivery and working together we promote healthy lifestyle initiatives to support the health and wellbeing of the participants. Public Health have mapped out health and support services available through existing contracts and commissions, hence helping to ensure these services are fully utilised and this will also mitigate the Restart delivery model covering additional costs to address health barriers and issues.
- 5.4 Quality Officers funded through Impact and Restart, assess the quality of the client journey which will include assessment of their health and wellbeing in preparation for accessing suitable employment. This will include health and wellbeing action plans to be completed to assess any specific participant health barriers.

6. *Decide*

- 6.1 Consideration on the Employment and Skills service and the level of dependency on grant funded programme and the risks associated with resourcing staff through short term external funding and grants ie BC Impact programme is funded by the European Social Fund and Youth Employment Initiative, Walsall Works is funded by Economic Growth Programme, Kickstart is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, Restart is a private commercial contract with Serco and Community Renewal Fund is central government funded pilot.
- 6.2 Members to consider whether to build more sustainable delivery models as a result of the successful delivery of employability programmes and whether to commence planning for future resourcing to sustain services beyond current grant end dates.
- 6.3 Members are asked to note the contents of the report and decide on how often they wish to be kept informed on our service delivery and whether the Walsall Works Management Group chaired by the Portfolio for Regeneration should continue to be the forum to provide oversight and scrutiny to all the employability programmes delivered by the Employment and Skills team.
- 6.4 To decide on the frequency of reports on Restart in order to decide on whether we continue to participate, due to the reputational and financial risk as this is predominately a payment by results programme. The key risk is that the Council is now legally bound by a 5 year contract (with a mutual termination clause) to

provide resources for a 4 year delivery period. It is the first time the Council has participated in this type of payment income model which in itself present risks due to uncertainty in our ability to achieve the requirements of the contract. It should be noted that Sandwell and Wolverhampton Council are in similar positions, so learning and best practice will be shared and the Council is working closely with two local delivery supply partners to Serco ie Steps to Work and Pathways Group.

7. Respond

The Employment and Skills Team will continue to deliver on existing programmes and review new funding opportunities to sustain and expand their existing delivery.

8. Review

- 8.1 Our service and programme performance are reviewed by the Walsall Works Management Group with representation from each directorate. The group receives regular performance reports and dashboards, with meetings being held quarterly either virtually or face to face. Further scrutiny takes place through reports to the Walsall Employment and Skills Board, currently chaired by Assistant Principal of Walsall College and represented by key stakeholders.
- 8.2 For Restart, weekly review meetings take place with Serco and performance management meetings are held quarterly. This process should help to shape our delivery model, ensuring that it delivers what participants require to progress to meaningful employment.
- 8.3 The Autumn Budget announced investing in people will boost employment, wages and prospects. The Budget and Spending Review launched the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), worth over £2.6 billion, to help people access new opportunities in places of need. Funding will rise to £1.5 billion a year by 2024-25. Alongside Spending Review 2021's wider investment in skills, the UKSPF will fund Multiply, a new UK-wide programme to equip hundreds of thousands of adults with functional numeracy skills to improve their employment prospects. To support young people, SR21 invests £560 million in youth services in England, including through the Youth Investment Fund and National Citizen Service
- 8.4 Members are asked to review the launch of the UK government's post-Brexit UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) – replacing EU 'structural funds', which is to be launched in April 2022. The Community Renewal Fund pilot projects are a precursor to the announcement of the UKSPF, and have been deemed as pilot projects to test innovative ideas on what works.

Background papers

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