

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Education, Skills & Culture Cabinet Board

12th October 2017

Report of the Head of Participation – Christopher Millis

Matter for Information

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Transition Arrangements from the Communities First to the Employability Programme

Purpose of the Report

To brief the Members with regard to the transition from the Communities First programme to the Employability Programme funded by Welsh Government.

Executive Summary

Communities First has worked locally in Neath Port Talbot since 2002. The funding for this programme is due to finish in March 2018. Welsh Government has introduced an Employability Programme which will start in 2018 which will be £12 million across the Country. The Employability Grant will support the continued delivery of Communities for Work and take forward the learning from the LIFT programme (workless households programme).

The programme is currently being developed with Partners in Neath Port Talbot and is due to start in January 2018. Employability mapping has taken place and consultations with the communities and partners are

ensuring duplication of services is not an issue. Outcomes are being considered and will reflect the number of participants in each delivery area expected to undertake activity such as vocational training, work placements, referrals, into employment and basic skills. Progress against these will be monitored by Welsh Government on a monthly basis.

The Legacy Fund is currently being developed to work alongside the Employability Plan and support individuals to return to work. Activities such as Welfare rights, digital inclusion, mental health, youth support and basic skills are important factors for people to be able to return to the workplace or even start their journey to be able to do so. This has worked well within Communities First current programme with positive outcomes. These are currently being considered for the legacy fund with further consultation required at a local level.

Background

Communities First has worked locally since 2002 and has had a number of different phases. In 2012 the programme became an Anti-poverty programme, with three themes, namely Learning, Prosperity and Health, Cluster working in the borough.

In October 2016 Welsh Government announced a change, for the programme, with the main aim of the new funding to be used for Employability.

The new Employability Grant (£12 million) across Local Authorities and a Legacy Fund (£6 million) across the current Communities First areas will start throughout Wales in 2018. Additional capital funding is currently being made available via the Community Facilities Programme (£4 million extra per year).

The Employability Grant will support the continued delivery of Communities for Work and take forward the learning from the LIFT programme (workless households programme). It will enable employability support to be provided to people either in or at risk of poverty who are not eligible for Communities For Work or other ESF programmes, including those who live outside the current Communities

First area postcodes. The development of the work supported through the grant will be further informed and shaped by the ongoing development of the Welsh Government's Employability Plan.

The development of the Employability Grant proposal will be informed by the following principles –

- Supporting individuals living in, or at risk of poverty
- Alignment with other Welsh Government Poverty Programmes, including Families First, Supporting People, and Flying Start
- Integration and co-operation with Communities For Work and other ESF funded employment support programmes
- Providing the infrastructure for Communities For Work.
- Caseloading and Mentoring
- Providing a community based service
- Support delivery from accessible, integrated and community hubs
- Alignment with CF Legacy Fund and Community Facilities Programme investments

Strategic fit for the programme moving forward needs to consider Future Generations and Wellbeing Act, Equality and Diversity, Welsh Language, integration programmes such as Families First, Flying Start and Supporting People in addition to any Employability local plans or programmes (for example NPT Works, Workways + Active Inclusion).

At a local level Employability programme mapping has taken place in order to access the needs and gaps that need to be addressed for the Employability Grant. This has highlighted the following –

- Current gaps - under 12 months unemployed, under employed or in work poverty, zero hour contracts, not fitting into existing programmes or unable to produce evidence to enable support from organisations, those individuals who have completed Communities For Work but require ongoing in work support.

- Providers felt continuing the link within the Employer Support Group which looks at engaging employers to avoid duplication, and the Engagement Providers Group brings together support agencies to share links and best practices.
- A Pilot Triage process has been operational since August in Port Talbot, with two Triage Officers for Communities for Work actioning referrals sent via the Port Talbot Job Centre through a single e-mail at Job Support. The two officers are able to identify where that individual is best suited for the different programmes within NPT. This is working well, and links within Communities First, Communities For Work, Workways +, Pace and DWP have grown to ensure that this can be rolled out to other Job Centres within Neath Port Talbot.

Consultation has taken place with regard to the change of the programme via community consultations, meeting with steering groups, workshops with Partners, Members Briefings, Third Sector Forum meeting, Welfare Reform meeting and a paper to the Public Service Board. As the Legacy Fund is further developed (principles have just been released by Welsh Government), this will then move forward and have further consultation with Partners.

The Employability programme will have a number of new posts in the structure; the majority of the posts are largely prescribed by Welsh Government, including Mentors and Participation Workers. The overall management for the programme will be an Employability Manager which will also oversee the Communities For Work structure. This will provide greater synergy within the two projects.

In terms of governance the project will continue to sit with Participation, and the services provided will continue to link with other Employability initiatives on a regular basis. The following are in place and set to continue –

- Reporting to Education, Skills and Culture Board

- Continued links with the Employment Support Group – all employment providers for the locality sit on this group and information is shared at an operational level.
- Continued links with the Engagement Providers Group
- Continue monthly meetings with Workways +
- Triage process in place that will be widened geographically

Outcomes are being considered and will reflect the number of participants in each delivery area expected to undertake activity such as vocational training, work placements, referrals, into employment and basic skills. Progress against these will be monitored by Welsh Government on a monthly basis. Additional information regarding participant information covering participant characteristics, equalities data and Adverse Childhood Experiences will also be commissioned on a quarterly basis. Reported outcomes will be based on individual records.

The Legacy Fund as mentioned above is currently being developed to work alongside the Employability Plan and support individuals to return to work. Welsh Government has mentioned in the Legacy Fund Principles paper which was recently received, that the fund is to continue the 'best bits' of the Communities First programme. Activities such as Welfare rights, digital inclusion, mental health, youth support and basic skills are important factors for people to be able to return to the workplace, or even start the journey to be able to do so and have worked well in the communities with positive outcomes. Evidence for such elements is being finalised at present and this will then move forward with local consultation. Partners have already been working with the management team to develop the priorities for the paper itself.

Financial Impact

The anticipated amount for the Employability Grant for 2018/19 is yet to be finalised with Welsh Government however it is anticipated the amount of the grant will be approximately £800,000 per year. The new operational structure will be in place in January 2018 providing funding

has been approved by Welsh Government. Therefore there will be no financial impacts associated with this report.

Workforce Impacts

Management of change for the current Communities First staff is being completed in order to minimise workforce impacts for the employees of the Council. Staff have been placed on prior consideration for new vacancies and 22 have gained other employment over the past year.

Voluntary Redundancy has also been offered to employees as an option and six are currently working through the process with management.

There may be a minority of staff that will be displaced however it is hoped such staff will gain employment internally within the next few months.

Legal Impacts

There are no legal impacts associated with this report

Risk Management

The new Employability programme will ensure further support for the communities and future employment for current staff. Staff will only be given contracts once the offer letter from Welsh Government has arrived and the programme will be managed within the Participation portfolio of the Local Authority working with other participation services both internally and externally of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. Grant funding terms and conditions will be adhered to by the management team working with corporate and directorate finance.

Without the use of the grant less support will be available in the community for Employability, and there will be staff, that will be without paid work, who largely live in the communities of Neath Port Talbot.

Consultation

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

The report is for information purposes only.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

N/A

Implementation of Decision

N/A

Appendices

N/A

List of Background Papers

Legacy Fund Guiding Principles – Welsh Government

Officer Contact

Mr Chris Millis, Head of Participation, 01639 763226 –
c.d.millis@npt.gov.uk

Mrs Angeline Spooner-Cleverly, Participation Co-ordinator, 01639
686044 – a.spooner-cleverly@npt.gov.uk