



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL

Education, Skills and Wellbeing Cabinet Board

Report of the Head of Education Development – Chris Millis

Matter for Information:

Wards Affected:

All

Employability, Skills, Sustainable Communities Growth Fund (SPF) and Food Poverty Programmes Update from within the Education Leisure and Life Long Learning Directorate

Purpose of the Report:

To update Members regarding the employability, skills, sustainable communities growth fund and food poverty programmes within Neath Port Talbot.

Executive Summary:

There are a number of different activities delivered in the employability and skills area that supports people living in our communities. Details can be seen below.

We have re-branded the employability provision for NPT, incorporating the new Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) Employability Anchor Project. These project as seen below are funded through different

funding sources, but come together to provide one holistic provision for NPT.

Communities for Work (CfW), a European Social Fund (ESF) employability programme working in partnership with Department of Working Pensions (DWP). The programme ceased delivery in March 23 with full programme closure October 23.

Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) a Welsh Government funded employability programme which re-focused in April 23 on the long term unemployed, economically inactive and short term unemployed from the age of 16+. Since April 23 CfW+ have received 378 engagements and 175 job entries.

Shared Prosperity Fund Employability Anchor Project – funded from UK Government has given NPT the opportunity of keeping provision which was previously funded from ESF such as Cynnydd NPT and Workways NPT, as well as incorporating new programmes such as Work Experience for all year 10 within our secondary schools, New Horizons a Youth Service tackling NEETs project and an Apprenticeship Coordinator. The programme commenced in April 23 and transitioned ESF funded staff into the programme, providing a cohesive Employability support for our people in NPT.

Skills and Training are supporting people through initial engagement via Jobs Growth Wales + and an apprenticeship pathway in addition to an alternative vocational pathway provision for our schools.

Commercial courses within Skills and Training helped over 600 people complete courses in a variety of subjects.

As part of SPF we have assisted our colleagues from Environment to map out the skills landscape for NPT working closely with the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (RLSP). We have recently appointed

a Skills Coordinator for NPT who will assist with this work going forward.

Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Sustainable Communities Growth Fund (SCGF) proposes to increase support offered within the communities of Neath Port Talbot, addressing areas of need, concentrating on poverty and equality themes, to promote local growth within communities. We have also incorporated a poverty and a young person's intervention as part of the anchor project to support the needs of communities.

Food poverty grants have been given to organisations via Welsh Government funding to support an increased number of people facing food poverty. The ELLL directorate are administering the fund. The grant scheme is currently live to organisations and being promoted locally.

Food Partnership Network – funded by the WLGA, NPT are developing food partnerships to transform local food systems across NPT to share common practice which will focus on food security, food poverty, food waste and local/community food production and distribution.

Background:

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) is supporting the UK Government commitment to levelling up agenda within the UK. The fund was designed to succeed and improve upon European structural funds, but is not a direct replacement. As part of people and skills, employability has formed one of the anchor projects for Neath Port Talbot.

NPT Employability provides a holistic co-ordinated employability provision within Neath Port Talbot. The project seeks to raise aspirations, develop soft skills and look to inspire our people to ensure they are supported throughout their journey. The project has built upon existing Welsh Government funded projects such as Communities for Work Plus, a person centred approach programme looking to removing barriers to employment, education and training through a wide range

of interventions. This can incorporate softer elements such as motivation, confidence building, work experience and volunteering. Having a wrap-around, single front door provision for employability ensures that our residents in Neath Port Talbot have the help, support and advice to meet their individual needs.

Communities for Work was funded by the European Social Fund and was in partnership with DWP. Delivery ended in March 23 and full closure will end in November 23. This programme had two priority age categories, Priority 1, 25+ and older and Priority 3, 16-24 years old, both provided an intensive mentoring one-to-one provision for those who are furthest away from the labour market with individuals either being long term unemployed, economically inactive or NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training). From the beginning of the programme (July 2016) to date March 23 we had 1,334 engagements and 554 job entries over the four delivery areas being Neath, Afan Western and Sandfields.

Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) funded by Welsh Government is a 16+ employability programme which was re-focused in April 23 with the ending of Communities for Work. The programme helps individuals who are long term unemployed, targeting those who are furthest away from the labour market or who have multiple barriers to employment, economically inactive or short term unemployed. Since April 23 CfW+ have received 378 engagements and 175 job entries. Referrals continue to be utilised through a one system triage process for all employability programmes. From 1st April 23 we have received 1,296 referrals.

The SPF Employability Anchor Project is part of the NPT Employability brand which captures a wide range of interventions to help and support individuals from 11 years to retirement age with wellbeing, employment and training, to those who are unemployed, economically inactive or who have protected characteristics as well as implementing work experience, volunteering and paid work opportunities. All employability

programmes utilise a single database (POD+) for recording data and is kept at one central point.

All NPT Employability SPF teams are now focused on achieving the various outputs and outcomes. With Cynnydd NPT 111 young people have had referral support, School Work Experience successfully worked with Dwr-y-Felin in July 23, with 206 students in total needing placements. New Horizons and Legacy teams within the youth service are seeing that most of the interventions are exceeding targets or on track. These can be from enrolling in further education/training, employment, voluntary work or gaining a qualification. Workways NPT currently engaged with 41 individuals, of which three are in a paid work opportunity (PWO) at three local businesses. Two have taken part in volunteering, one in training and one has gained employment.

An Apprenticeship Coordinator was appointed during August 23 as part of Shared Prosperity Funding. His role is to map out existing pathway opportunities for businesses to access apprenticeships for their employees and routes in which they can expand their current workforce.

Skills and Training (S&T) aim to provide the best possible service within work based learning which are run in partnership with Pathways Training (NPT College Group) and B-Wbl (Pembrokeshire College), helping and supporting NPT young people aged 16-19 years on a either a Jobs Growth Wales + programme or on an apprenticeship programme. Jobs Growth Wales + and apprenticeships have a long and successful history of providing young people with highly effective work-integrated learning to secure employment pathways. It is also a route to progression, and we have seen learners with low self-esteem and confidence being able to sustain work placements and going onto our apprenticeship programmes becoming qualified hairdressers, health and social care advisors and childcare supervisors. The learners thrive on work experience, applying their skills and being

empowered with paid employment. Currently we have 140 learners on the programme.

S&T also offer an alternative provision to NPT schools and are currently working with Ysgol Bae Baglan, Ysgol Hendre-Felin and Dwr-y-Felin offering our pupils an alternative vocational pathway to progress within the industry of hairdressing and barbering, construction, groundworks and childcare. Currently S&T have 63 young people on programme.

The Skills and Training commercial arm offer training internally and externally, generating additional income for the department, whilst developing a reputation for providing good quality, effective industry recognised training, meeting the needs of businesses locally and supporting individuals to maintain or develop their skills and knowledge. Over 600 people have gained qualifications in first aid, paediatric first aid, manual handling, site safety plus, food hygiene and health and safety.

Tir Morfa Centre, the Workstation and the Opportunity Hub at Aberafan Shopping Centre continues to be places where young people and adults feel comfortable to drop in and ask for advice and support. The Opportunity Hub is opening this winter once again as a Warm Hub.

Work has already been undertaken to initiate a skills audit/mapping exercise as part of the Shared Prosperity Fund People and Skills open call process. To assist with our skills agenda, we appointed a Skills Coordinator for NPT who in turn will drive the skills agenda for our local authority.

Sustainable Communities Growth Fund (SPF) is funding for communities and supports themes where there are limited funds in place. It has an emphasis on poverty and equalities. This grant will work closely with other grant schemes such as the NPTC Third Sector Grant, Valleys and Villages Prosperity Grant and NPTCVS Third Sector grants to add value and avoid duplication.

The Council is responsible for managing this grant, ensuring that all necessary procedures and processes are put in place before the grant is awarded. The grant has employed a funding officer to manage the fund and ensure it is marketed and administered correctly. The main purpose of the work is to enhance the variety of services available in our communities, progressing the poverty and equality theme and subject areas that are part of these themes. So far we have awarded £210,796.80 to five projects.

The panel has decided to assess all remaining applications on the 14th December and we are expecting upwards of 24 projects to be submitted. The deadline for receipt of all projects is 30th November 2023. The fund is now closed to all new expressions of interest because we are already very heavily oversubscribed.

NPT Council have received Welsh Government funding of £56,015.00 in order to support an increased number of people facing food poverty. Known as the Food Poverty Grant Fund awards will be granted to eligible organisations via an application process. The funding is currently open for applicants at any time in order for organisations to utilise the funds this year. A cap is in place in order to give as many organisations as possible funding. This is currently set at £3,000. Guidelines explaining the criteria and the application process are currently on the Council website or for those seeking for information, you can contact our Business Support Officer who supports this grant. To date we have received ten applications estimating a total of £22,670.39.

The Food Partnership Network is funded by the WLGA. NPTC are developing Food Partnerships to transform local food systems across NPT to share common practice which will focus on food security, food poverty, food waste and local/community food production and distribution.

Financial Impacts:

All budgets are being monitored at present.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for information purposes.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

The projects will have a positive impact on the valley communities in terms of support available locally.

Workforce Impacts:

There will be a Management of Change process commencing in November 2023 with the reduced funding from Welsh Government with Communities for Work Plus and the Food Partnership Fund.

Legal Impacts:

There no legal implications associated with this report.

Risk Management Impacts:

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations:

For information

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

N/A

Implementation of Decision:

N/A

Appendices:

N/A

List of Background Papers:

N/A

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