

WORK ENABLEMENT (Mid Sussex NEETs Mentoring Project) UPDATE

REPORT OF: HEAD OF CORPORATE RESOURCES
Contact Officer: Natasha Allen, Partnerships Manager
Email: natasha.allen@midsussex.gov.uk Tel: 01444 477204
Wards Affected: All
Key Decision: No
Report to: Scrutiny Committee for Community, Housing and Planning
21 March 2018

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides an update on the 'Work Enablement' Project, which is the commissioned Mid Sussex NEETs Mentoring Project, named Positive Placements for those not in education, employment, or training, (NEETs).

Summary

2. Performance has been good overall, with the project on track or close to delivering against key performance targets. Since the start of the Work Enablement Projects in 2013, unemployment in Mid Sussex has fallen, and a range of other services now provide opportunities for those out of work or in significant debt. On that basis it is considered that the NEETS Mentoring Project delivers effectively against priorities and within the current resources available.
3. This report provides an update on the progress of this project, with a backward look to the projects outcomes for 2016/17. This report also sets out current progress on the project for the current financial year 2017/18 and also outlines commissioning intentions for the project for 2018/19.

Recommendations

The Committee are recommended to:

- i) Consider the progress report;
 - ii) To endorse that future reporting of this project be incorporated into the Mid Sussex Partnership Annual Report and for it not to be considered as a separate report.
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Background

4. In 2015/16 £40,000 from the WSCC Think Family Budget and £20,000 from the Council was allocated to fund Work Enablement Projects. In 2016/17 and in 2017/18 the total amount available for this area of work was £26,000, all of this being from the Council, with no contribution from WSCC. As a result of no additional funding being received from WSCC, the Work Enablement Project and the Training and Learning Project ended in March 2016 and the £26,000 of funding from this Council was used to extend the commissioned Mid Sussex NEETs Mentoring Project, Positive Placements for 2016/17. This project is run by the YMCA DLG and is known as Positive Placements, and offers intensive one to one support to individuals. This was also the case for 2017/18.

5. Since the start of the Work Enablement Projects in 2013, unemployment in Mid Sussex has fallen and a range of other services now provide opportunities for those out of work or in significant debt.

Worklessness in Mid Sussex

6. In January 2018, 435 people were claiming Job Seekers Allowance in Mid Sussex which accounts for 0.5% of the working age population. At the time this is the lowest rate in West Sussex with the next lowest being Horsham at 0.8% (625 people). The highest was Arun at 1.4% (1,185 people). The South East regional average was 1.2%, and the average for Great Britain was 2.0%. By comparison, in July 2015, 390 people were claiming Job Seekers Allowance in Mid Sussex which accounted for 0.4% of the working age population. At the time that was the lowest rate in West Sussex with the next lowest being Horsham at 0.6% (498 people). The highest was Crawley at 1.3% (936 people). The regional average in July 2015 was 1%. By comparison in February 2013 there were 1,019 people claiming Job Seekers Allowance accounting for 1.2% of the working age population in Mid Sussex and a regional average of 2.6%.
7. Since 2013 a range of agencies are also offering work enablement projects. These include Clarion Futures Communities (formally Affinity Sutton Housing Group), Hyde Housing Association, Department for Work and Pensions outreach workers and Aspire Sussex adult education service.

Progress on Commissioned Project - NEETs in Mid Sussex

8. While support for adults out of work has developed in the Mid Sussex area, support for young people is still a concern and was highlighted in the West Sussex Families Plan as a key area of focus. Those Not in Education or Employment (NEET) under the age of 25, account for 18% (80 people) of those currently claiming Job Seekers Allowance in Mid Sussex.
9. As of December 2017 there were 34 NEET and available young people in Mid Sussex in Year 12 and 13. However there are an additional 229 young people whom their status is not currently known as a result of the way the data is recorded by WSCC. It is therefore likely that this figure is much higher than 34. By comparison, in November 2015 there were 114 known NEET young people within Mid Sussex, and an additional 520 young people whom their status was not known as a result of the way the data was recorded by WSCC. You will note from the NEET data that there is a considerable drop in numbers recorded, however it must be noted that some of this reduction will be as a result of changes in the tracking guidance from Central Government, which reduced the tracking cohort from all those in academic year 12 through to year 15, to those just in years 12 and 13.
10. The Mid Sussex Partnership (MSP) commissioned a NEETs project in January 2016 to provide a mentor programme to support at least 30 young people, who are NEET, into the workplace, further education or training. This extension continued the project, provided by the YMCA, from February 2016 until March 2017. A further extension of this project being delivered by the YMCA occurred in March 2017 and it is being funded until March 2018. It is proposed to extend the commissioned Mid Sussex NEETs Mentoring Project into 2018/19.

11. The Mid Sussex NEETs Project works to support young people into training, education or employment by providing a mentor from within the Mid Sussex community. Those mentors currently working with the project come from a range of backgrounds including Head Teachers, Careers Advisors, Business Owners and Social Workers. The current performance of this project for 2017/18 and last year's performance for 2016/17 is outlined in Appendix 1.
12. The project is performing well and is on track to have 30 young people aged 16-25 to go through the Mentoring Project in 2017/18. At 69%, the project is above the target requirement of 50% of mentees being 'NEET' for over 6 months when they initially enrol for the project. At 80% the project is above the 60% target of attendees to show demonstrable improvement in work readiness, either through improved qualification or through gaining work experience after accessing the service.

Next Steps

13. WSCC have confirmed there will be no funds available for 2018/19 to support any such project in Mid Sussex. However, there is provision of £26,000 within the Council's budget for the Mid Sussex NEETs Mentoring Project 2018/19.
14. It is proposed that due to the reduction in available funds and the low level of worklessness in Mid Sussex that the Mid Sussex NEETs Mentoring Project is the only project that the Council allocates funds to and supports financially. With the Mid Sussex NEETs Mentoring Project, Positive Placements being the only project of worklessness that the Council funds, it is also proposed that reporting of this project be incorporated into the Mid Sussex Partnership Annual Report and for it not to be considered as a separate report.

Financial Implications

15. The Council has allocated £26,000 in its base budget to fund the Mid Sussex NEETs Mentoring Project in 2018/19.

Risk Management Implications

16. There is a risk that the commissioned provider does not meet the performance targets set. Robust monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure the project is delivering intended outcomes.
17. A down-turn in the economy could result in insufficient jobs available locally for people participating in the existing NEETs project to move into. Similarly an up-turn in the economy and ongoing unemployment could negate the need for the NEETs project. This risk is outside of the council's control to manage but the situation will be closely monitored.

Equality and Customer Service Implications

18. An Equality Impact Assessment of the commissioned project has been carried out. The assessment identified a possible need for courses to be provided in specific languages to address the needs of people from black and minority ethnic groups (BME). The providers have been asked to monitor the need for this during the term of the contracts but have not identified any need since April 2014. The BME population in Mid Sussex according to the last census is 9.7%.

Background Papers

Work Enablement - report to Scrutiny Committee for Leisure and Community, 25 November 2015.

Equality Impact Assessment for Work Enablement – October 2013.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Mid Sussex NEETs Mentoring Project Performance Indicators for 2016/17 and that of 2017/18 which is available at the time of this report being written.

APPENDIX 1

Mid Sussex NEETs Mentoring Project Performance Indicators for 2016/17 and 2017/18

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Performance 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017</u>	<u>Performance 1 April 2017 – 31 January 2018</u>
1. Minimum of 30 young people aged 16-25 to go through the Mentoring project by the end of the duration of the year-long project 1 st April 2017 – 31 st March 2018.	28	26
1.1 Number of current mentees in project.	19	18
1.2 Number of mentees positively exiting the project.	8	4
1.3 Number of mentees disengaged from the project.	2	0
2. 10% of mentees should be referred to the project through the Think Family and Family Support Network.	21% (6 mentees)	31% (8 mentees)
3. 50% of mentees should be NEET for over 6 months when they initially enrol for the project.	64% (18 mentees)	69% (18 mentees)
4. Recruitment of an appropriate number of mentors to support a minimum of 30 young people.	They started the year with 15 mentors. During the year three left and six were interviewed and trained.	They currently have 15 active mentors.
5. Retention of 70% of mentors	81% mentors were retained.	Retention is at 60% as of 31 st December 2017.
6. 60% of attendees to show demonstrable improvement in work readiness, either through improved qualification or through gaining work experience.	75% showed improved work readiness etc.	80% are showing improved work readiness etc.
7. At the time of the last contact with their mentors, 80% of mentees to fill out evaluations of the project with satisfaction ratings of 75% or more.	60% of mentees completed evaluations with an average satisfaction rating of 96%.	100% of mentees have filled out evaluations with a satisfaction rating of 89%.

8. 100% of mentees that positively exited the project followed up three months after the completion of the mentoring to assess what the long term outcome of the intervention was. Of those successfully contacted, 50% to be in education; training; apprenticeships; or paid employment.	Not requested in 2016/17.	100% of mentees followed up and 100% are in EET.
9. All complaints from service users to be responded to within 10 working days	No complaints received.	No complaints received to date.

This project is also monitored via the following measures:

- Clear action plans with outcomes development for each young person and demonstrate movement along the path towards EET;
- All young people to be provided with advice and guidance on the basis of their situation;
- Appropriate attendees to be referred to existing services where these exist;
- A clear exit strategy and development of alternative funding sources for the project. With regard to their exit strategy the YMCA DLG continue looking for local funding / grants and fundraising as well as working with the Head of Education on a strategy to get local businesses on board to support the project. Should no funding be found, YMCA will continue to employ a coordinator for fewer hours to wind down the project.