



REPORT BY EMPLOYMENT WORKING GROUP

Board Meeting – 4 December 2003

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Board members on the activity of the Employment Working Group in progressing initiatives in relation to barriers to employment within the Coalfield Area.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the meeting of 6 March 2003, Sheila White, Consultant, delivered a presentation to the Board detailing the main findings of the work undertaken to explore the perceived barriers to employment within the Coalfield Area, namely:

- childcare needs;
- transport to work; and
- skills and aspirations.

- 2.2 An Employment Seminar was subsequently organised on 29 May 2003 to allow Board members to fully discuss these findings.

- 2.3 At its meeting on 19 June 2003, Board members remitted the Employment Working Group to take forward the agreed initiatives.

3. PROGRESS TO DATE

- 3.1 Detailed below are the initiatives that are currently being progressed to address the perceived barriers to employment.

3.2 Childcare Needs

- 3.2.1 In partnership with Jobcentre Plus and the Childcare Partnership, the Recruitment Sub Group, established by the Childcare Partnership, will:

- develop flexible packages of support that accommodate the needs of individuals
- provide support and advice for childminders in relation to registration
- provide assistance and advice for childminders who require a Business Plan, and
- organise and deliver sessions to raise awareness of and generate interest in childminding as an employment option.

3.2.2 It has been recognised that the Ayrshire Childcare Information Service requires to raise its profile and develop a range of information material in relation to the various aspects of childcare. A working group has been established to:

- re-brand and re-launch the Ayrshire Childcare Information Service, and
- promote its services through attending appropriate events.

3.2.3 The Childcare Partnership is currently in the process of developing a flexible 'sitter service', which would address the needs of those whose shift patterns require flexible childcare arrangements.

3.3 Transport to Work

3.3.1 An application for funding to develop a 'Wheels to Work' initiative in the Coalfield Area has been submitted to the Scottish Executive Rural Transport Initiative. It is anticipated that the application will provide funds for up to ten scooters.

3.3.2 An application for funding to commission a feasibility study in respect of a 'Feeder Service', to connect residents of outlying areas to central transport provision, has also been submitted to the Scottish Executive Rural Transport Initiative.

3.4 Skills And Aspirations

3.4.1 The Employment Working Group is considering the development of Roadshow/Half-Day Motivational Sessions aimed at raising the confidence and aspirations of residents of the Coalfield Area. Further work requires to be done to ensure a more community based approach, which is sustainable and links to the Further Education sector.

4. EMPLOYMENT RELATED ISSUES ARISING FROM THE SIP REVIEW PROCESS

4.1 The Employment Working Group has been asked to consider a number of employment related issues arising from the SIP Annual Review process, in particular how an integrated package of employment related projects can be taken forward beyond 31 March 2005. The recommendations arising from this area of work will be presented to a future Board meeting.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 It is recommended that the Board notes the content of the report.

**Jim Burns, Chairperson
Employment Working Group
25 November 2003**