



EMPLOYMENT SEMINAR

Board Meeting – 19 June 2003

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Board members of the outcome of the Employment Seminar held on 29 May 2003.

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;
- transport; and
- skills and aspirations.

- 2.2 In addition, the report included the consultant's recommendations for addressing these barriers.

- 2.3 At the meeting, Board members requested that a seminar be organised at which they and key partners could discuss and prioritise the recommendations within the Consultant's report.

- 2.4 Detailed below is the format of the workshops, at which members were tasked with:

- discussing the initiatives recommended by the Consultant;
- considering whether there are additional priorities which require to be addressed; and
- prioritising actions to be taken forward.

3 CHILDCARE NEEDS

- 3.1 The three initiatives recommended to address the barriers to work posed by the lack of accessible/affordable childcare were:

- a recruitment drive for childminders across a range of venues in partnership with the Childcare Partnership and JobcentrePlus;
- the development of promotional material detailing the services available locally and the benefits which can be accessed to assist in paying for them; and

- a flexible sitter service to support individuals into employment.
- 3.2 In respect of the recruitment drive for childminders, it was felt that this was not the main priority. The group was of the opinion that the priority should be the promotion of existing childcare services in the area and the benefits which are available to assist with the cost of appropriate, high quality childcare. In this regard, the services of Ayrshire Child Care Information Service require to be promoted.
- 3.3 The group believe that to take this forward, promotional material should be developed and utilised to promote the range of available services, initially through a series of roadshows. In addition, the material should be disseminated as widely as possible to ensure that individuals can access information easily. It was also felt that Community Police Officers should be involved in the roadshows to raise awareness of the legal position in respect of leaving children and young people unsupervised or in charge of younger children.
- 3.4 There was agreement that there is a need for more flexible childcare to address the needs of individuals who work weekends and evenings and those with older children. It was, felt therefore, that the establishment of a sitter service linked to existing childcare providers should be investigated with a view to establishing an initial pilot.

4 TRANSPORT TO WORK

- 4.1 The three initiatives recommended to address the barriers to work posed by the lack of available/affordable transport were:
- a 'Wheels to Work' initiative making scooters available to young people requiring transport to work;
 - a feeder service or dial-a-ride to work initiative; and
 - a car leasing scheme.
- 4.2 The participants were of the opinion that the 'Wheels to Work' scheme should be further investigated with a view to taking forward a pilot initiative.
- 4.3 There were reservations about the Dial-a-Ride scheme but it was decided that discussions should be held with Strathclyde Passenger Transport Association in respect of developing a similar innovative scheme tailored to the needs of the Coalfield communities.
- 4.4 It was also felt that the Coalfield Community Transport (CCT) initiative should look into the possibility of developing existing services to provide morning and evening feeder services in the local area.
- 4.5 Participants were positive about the car leasing scheme and would support investigating this further.
- 4.6 Discussion within the workshop highlighted the fact that the preferred option for many in relation to travelling to work is a car but that the cost of driving

lessons is often prohibitive. The Coalfield Community Transport initiative will, therefore, positively pursue funding from the Action Teams for Jobs Transport Projects Fund to purchase a driving simulator which will cut the number of driving lessons needed and, in generating income, will contribute to the sustainability of the CCT initiative.

5 SKILLS AND ASPIRATIONS

5.1 The three initiatives recommended to address the barriers to work posed by the lack of skills and low aspirations were:

- a roadshow highlighting local employment and training opportunities, in partnership with JobcentrePlus, the colleges and Careers Scotland;
- a roadshow delivering half-day confidence building motivational sessions for adults; and
- an initiative to work with young people who are about to leave school with poor or no qualifications, for example an inter-school Breakthrough programme.

5.2 Due to previous experience, participants had reservations about roadshows as a means to address the issues of skills and training, and motivation, confidence and aspirations. There was agreement that there is a need to address these issues but that the approach would have to be carefully thought out and linked to transport and childcare solutions, and advice on benefits.

5.3 There was firm support for an initiative addressing the motivation and aspirations of young people about to leave school and felt that it merited development.

6 EMPLOYERS' FORUM

6.1 Further discussion is necessary in respect of how the Employer's Forum, established by the Consultant, can best be involved in the work of the SIP.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- i) agrees the proposed initiatives to address the identified barriers to employment;
- ii) remits the Manger Social Inclusion to take forward the agreed initiatives; and
- iii) otherwise notes the content of the report.

Gwen Barker
Manager Social Inclusion
9 June 2003