



## EMPLOYMENT ISSUES IN THE COALFIELD AREA - SUMMARY OF THE CONSULTANT'S REPORT

**Board Meeting – 6 March 2003**

### **1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To present to the Board the main findings from the work of the Management Consultant commissioned to explore a range of employment issues across the Coalfield Communities and potential solutions for consideration by the Board.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In a paper presented to the Board on 17 January 2002, a number of employment related issues were highlighted which would be taken forward over time by the Employment Working Group, including:
- profiling of Coalfield settlements;
  - childcare;
  - skills audit
  - transport to work; and
  - employer forum.
- 2.2 At the Board meeting of 5 December 2002, the Employment Working Group reported that a Management Consultant had been appointed to undertake some targeted research and that ongoing progress would be presented to the SIP Board.
- 2.3 Specifically, the consultant was required to investigate the following:
- Within childcare services, identify whether there is a need to provide further childcare interventions to support people back to work? If so, what is the need; where is the need; who is the need for and how should this be addressed.
  - The provision of a skills audit framework, the methodology to identify the skills within the Coalfield Area, the aspirations and attitude to work and identify any gaps which may exist.
  - Identification of any transport to work issues within the Coalfield Area and make recommendations which address these issues.
  - The establishment of a 'focus group' for employers.

2.4 To meet the requirements of the consultancy brief, it was agreed by the Employment Working Group that a Community Audit be carried out in the Lugar and Logan communities. These communities were identified as representative of other settlements and the results of this audit would, therefore, give a good indication of need across the Coalfield Area. In addition, the framework would over time, allow the audit to be replicated in communities across the Coalfield Area.

### **3 CONSULTANT'S FINDINGS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS**

3.1 Detailed below are some of the main findings of the report, a full copy of which will be available at the Board meeting.

#### **3.2 Transport to Work**

3.2.1 Two hundred and forty-six surveys were completed in relation to transport to work. This was a combined total of residents of Lugar and Logan and those surveyed over a two-week period in Cumnock Job Centre. Seventy-one percent of respondents believe that they have been denied the opportunity of work because of a lack of transport and over seventy-five percent rely on public transport as their main source of travel to work.

3.2.2 The consultant's recommendations, for potential solutions to the problem of transport to work are presented below for consideration:

- Establish a 'Wheels to Work' pilot.
- Establish feeder services, run by the Community Transport Initiative, into Cumnock from outlying villages for bus connections to, e.g. Ayr, Kilmarnock and Irvine.
- Investigate the options of registered new routes for travel to work areas, e.g. Muirkirk to Glasgow/South Lanarkshire.
- Investigate the potential for a car sharing scheme.
- Investigate of the potential for a car leasing scheme.

#### **3.3 Childcare Needs**

3.3.1 Face to face interviews were carried out with individuals with children of an age requiring childcare services. Twenty percent responded that a lack of appropriate and affordable childcare prevented them from working. Thirty-five percent of respondents felt that childcare provision was too expensive and, therefore, parents, reluctantly in some cases, made other arrangements, including use of parents or friends, or chose to stay at home. Parents required day care provision which included both pre and after school care.

3.3.2 The consultant's recommendations for potential initiatives to address childcare issues include:

- Develop an 'Adopt a Granny' scheme which would also benefit older people who are socially isolated.
- Extending current services by exploring the potential to build childminding facilities on to existing mother and toddler groups.
- Establish an 'au pair' type service for a few hours a day in the child's home.

- Establish a pilot centre for childcare where childminders come to work as opposed to working in their own homes, possibly using local community centres.
- Raising awareness of the state benefits available to subsidise childcare.

### 3.4.1 Skills and Aspirations

A survey was undertaken with individuals from the communities of Lugar and Logan and a further survey was completed by young people at yipworld.com. Gaining more confidence and interview skills were identified by those in work as the most important support in progressing to work. Among those who were unemployed, transport issues and a lack of local jobs featured highly in people's reasons for not being able to achieve what they wanted in life.

The aspirations for future employment among the young people surveyed were reasonably high, with just over half of the sample expecting to attend college or university. It was heartening that, in response to the question about what would make their life different, only two young people answered that moving away from the area would enhance their lives.

### 3.4.2 The consultant's recommendations for initiatives to address the issues around skills and aspirations are as follows:

- Develop a programme of half day ideas sessions for confidence, motivation and skills identification that can be delivered in local communities in a rolling programme.
- Develop a training skills road show to travel around the communities in the Coalfield Area to encourage and facilitate access to training at local colleges.
- Investigate the possibility of a 'before you drop out' (of school) training course for the last term to motivate those who will leave school and become unemployed. There is the potential to involve Careers Scotland in such an initiative.
- Develop a mechanism for influencing the work experience scheme to improve its ability to match and offer meaningful work experience.
- Develop a work experience scheme for adults wishing to change career.
- Seek to influence the Support to Communities' Learning Opportunities Programme to be more attractive to a greater number of people.

## 4.3 Employer's Forum

### 4.3.1 An Employer's Forum of business people who live and work in the local area has been established. The Board now requires to decide how it wishes to interact with this group.

## 5 THE WAY FORWARD

### 5.1 Board members now require to give consideration to the range of recommendations as detailed above to enable the consultant to develop implementation plans and to investigate funding sources for appropriate initiatives.

## **6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 It is recommended that the Board:

- i) note the main findings arising from the consultant;
- ii) consider and comment on the proposed solutions and agree which actions should be included within an implementation plan;
- iii) agree to receive a copy of the implementation plan and consider future investment requirements at a future Board meeting;
- iv) consider the appropriate opportunities for future interaction with the Employers Forum; and
- v) otherwise note the content of the report.

**Gwen Barker  
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25 February 2003**