

## **Economy & Education Sub Group**

### **Work in Progress – Proposed Priorities and Actions**

Following the last sub group meeting we met with a view to develop further the interface with Gadbrook Business Park. An issue you raised is clarity over what the subgroup priorities are, so I have produced this document to assist with this and hopefully seek your approval to proceed.

We are in the main in line with Cheshire West and National statistics for those subjects of benefits, unemployment and educational achievement. However in comparison to other locations across Northwich & Rural North we clearly have underperforming localities, such as:

- Frodsham, Rudheath & Northwich East for long term benefit claimants
- Rudheath, Witton, Winnington & Frodsham for higher levels of unemployment
- Rudheath and Northwich East for higher levels of NEET
- Rudheath & Northwich East for lower levels of school GCSE achievement.

Some of these locations are replicated across the underperforming subjects and in particular, those of Rudheath and Northwich East are common to all subjects. These two locations also fall within the remit of the Rudheath & Witton neighbourhood and as this Neighbourhood is a priority for the Area Partnership Board it has been agreed to focus the sub-group priorities for these locations, thus the proposed priorities for this sub-group are:

- Increasing the number of students achieving 5xGCSE Grades A-C
- Increasing the number of individuals involved in further education, employment and training, thus reducing NEET.
- Increasing the number of individuals being employed by local business, thus reducing longer term unemployment.
- Encouraging those individuals on benefits to become engaged in personal skills development with a view to becoming employed.
- Implementation and deployment of a family support process
- Promoting and increasing the number of self-employed

In order to progress and plan for the above priorities they have been categorised into the following headings:

- Educational Achievement
- NEET Improvement
- Employment Opportunities
- Benefit Rationalisation
- Increasing Family Aspirations

Taking each of the above, the following sections outline a description of the related heading and any supporting actions, either in progress or being planned.

## 1. Educational Achievement

There are five primary schools feeding into Rudheath Community High School (RCHS), they are:

- Rudheath
- Victoria Road
- Witton & Church Walk
- Lostock Gralam
- Winnington

The head teacher of RCHS, Matthew Wood commenced his placement in January this year and he has already shown his commitment and intention to building upon the community status of the school, by:

- Regaining ownership and control of The Store, with a view to offering its facilities to local communities and to provide access to learning opportunities and school resources.
- Offering to host a neighbourhood community website, working with the neighbourhood team, local residents and students to design and implement the site.

However RCHS also needs to focus its attentions towards improving its GCSE attainment levels for subjects such as English, Maths and Science.

### **% of students achieving 5 or more A\*-C grades (inc. Eng and Math)<sup>[1]</sup>**

	<b>CHS Leftwich</b>	<b>Hartford HS</b>	<b>Helsby HS</b>	<b>Rudheath Comm. HS</b>	<b>St Nicholas Catholic HS</b>	<b>Weaverham HS</b>
<b>2007</b>	53	45	76	32	70	63
<b>2008</b>	59	55	75	35	71	66
<b>2009</b>	60	56	75	37	60	62
<b>2010</b>	64	56	68	34	72	69

This will inevitably place demands upon the feeder primary schools especially Rudheath Primary which has been placed in special status following an OFSTED visit earlier in the year and they await the outcome of a more recent OFSTED visit to review the school's development action plan.

At present there are no inter school arrangements to share development action plans, thus RCHS is currently unable to influence the key direction of one of its local primary schools. This is something that should be addressed.

RCHS also provides provision for students with special needs, the current GCSE results includes the special needs children. There is a need to establish the GCSE grade levels excluding special needs children, in order to compare, on an equal footing, RCHS with other higher performing schools in the area.

In addition to the above there is also a need to establish the numbers of students attending RCHS who do not live in the neighbourhood (including special needs). This will help to compare local Vs non local achievements and possible related primary school shortfalls.

The demise of the Northwich Educational Improvement Programme (EIP) and its resource later in the year may also have a negative impact upon the cluster of schools in this area. The existing EIP manager is working on an exit plan which will be put to the EIP committee at end of June at which it is hoped the plan will be endorsed and owners allocated to the actions. Discussions will take place to seek adoption of the plans by the cluster group, a function which will be key in ensuring new value add initiatives are deployed to support the schools beyond the proposed EIP exit plans.

In due course a representative of the schools cluster should be invited to the sub group and outline their plans to address the educational achievement issues, identifying the aims and outcomes for endorsement by the sub group.

I am conscious that along with some of the other priority areas, there are a variety of ways in which we can achieve outcomes and be measured against them. In the case of the educational achievement measure, perhaps the number of grades A-C GCSE is not the only measure of success we should consider for showing children are being given the opportunity to prepare for a career and a life after their school education ceases.

### **1.1 Educational Achievement - Supporting Actions**

- Create EIP exit plan and seek endorsement from EIP steering committee and support of APB.
- Circulate copy of endorsed EIP exit plan to wider APB members
- Identify current achievement grades, by student place of residence
- Identify current achievement grades, by students without special needs
- Align current and future qualifications demands against current future business growth requirements
- Seek agreement for inter school development plans to supporting shared academic improvements and outcomes.
- Invite cluster representative to share joint school plans with sub group
- Identify alternative ways of developing students abilities and aspirations which will contribute towards improving their academic capability and personal development

## **2. NEET Improvements**

This section is yet to be developed and requires input from partners such as Connexions, adult and children services. In the meantime, listed below are some thoughts for consideration:

- Reducing Teenage pregnancies

- Student Interview training, techniques, mannerisms, appearance, CV writing
- Personal learning
- GCSE - alternative qualifications and training programmes. EG Apprenticeships
- Community volunteering
- Aspirations
- Family Support Programme (see section 5)

### NEET Breakdown of Figures January 2011<sup>[2]</sup>

Northwich & Rural North	16		17		18		Total
	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Those not yet ready for work or learning	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Those awaiting an E2E place	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Those requiring sub level 2 training - place not available	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Those requiring level 2 training - place not available	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Those requiring level 3+ training - place not available	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unemployed - Start date agreed (education/employment or training)	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Seeking employment or training	6	5	9	19	11	17	67
New Deal Gateway	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Not Capable of Work due to Health	0	0	0	0	1	3	4
Not in EET due to Pregnancy	1	0	2	0	4	0	7
Not available - Religious grounds	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not available - Not likely to be economically active	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Not Available to Labour Market - Other Reason	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Voluntary Work	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Personal Development Opportunities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Personal Development Opportunity which Pays Allowance or Wage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Supporting Family - Young Carers	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Supporting Family - Teenage Parents	1	0	1	0	6	0	8
Those supervised by YOTS	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Those with LDD	1	0	0	2	3	3	9

### 2.1 NEET Improvements - Supporting Actions

- Provide NEET data for this area to the benefits team for them to cross check against their database. To identify family support opportunities, EG CV training.

### 3. Employment Opportunities

The Northwich Jobcentre confirms there are some 1500 individuals who have skills and are ready for employment. Unfortunately they are struggling to obtain employment. Of these, a third are long term unemployed.

At April 2009, 6% of unemployed people in Northwich and Rural North had been out of work for over a year.<sup>[3]</sup>

### **Unemployment (Claimant Count) Residence Based Estimates CWACC Oct 09<sup>[5]</sup> – Top 3 Areas**

	<b>Claimant Counts</b>	<b>Working age Residents 2007</b>	<b>Rate (%)</b>
Northwich Witton	293	4170	7.0
Northwich Castle	198	4050	4.9
Weaverham	165	3750	4.4

Local businesses are cherry picking employees, by advertising through their own web sites or using agencies to supply candidates. This is having a negative impact upon local esteem, aspirations and confidence.

The neighbourhood is surrounded by local businesses, Gadbrook Park being within the neighbourhood and in reasonable walking distance. Other areas such as Lostock Business Park, Northwich Town Centre are within convenient short commuting distance and the local bus services could provide the required transport.

However, as the current jobcentre stats indicate, there is no guarantee that these locations can offer job interviews, let alone jobs. In order to help overcome these issues, there is a need to identify the following business needs:

- What are the current skills requirements?
- What are the future skills requirements?
- Do they have any employment programmes, EG NVQ/apprenticeships
- Do they offer job placements and voluntary working initiatives
- What is the current and future growth potential across the area and locally?
- What businesses are on the decline and may even disappear?
- Do companies participate in any local employment charter or labour market agreements?

In addition to the above, there is also a need to establish the current skill base within the unemployed so that gap analysis can be undertaken between the business needs and the neighbourhood skills.

It is proposed that the above is targeted towards Gadbrook Business Park with the aim of developing an employment improvement pilot. This will require close liaisons with the Gadbrook Park businesses through the existing Groundwork Business Improvement District (BID) interfaces.

From this we will need to assess current capability to train and develop these skills and if necessary position individuals on long-term unemployment into:

- voluntary work placements in order to adjust to employment conditions

- learning courses delivering qualified labour skills EG Plasterers and brick layers. These types of skills are likely with the potential Northwich Regeneration opportunities EG Winnington
- Community related employment EG Social enterprise

We will also need to work with local businesses to encourage them to engage with the unemployed, by offering work placements to them which will assist them in developing their existing skills with a view to offering interviews after their placement.

We will also need to show the businesses what benefits they will obtain by working in partnership with the sub group and the APB. These benefits could potentially be:

- Stronger employment brokering – a local employment relationship (EG better understanding of business needs creating improved solutions)
- Improved transport arrangements – reduction in car parking issues
- Diversification opportunities – training provision, community involvements (EG Social Enterprise partnerships)

Agencies such a Job Centres and educational partners will need to help address these issues by sharing unemployment data, skill data and planned activities to support actions to help reduce our employment issues. Our third sector colleagues will also need to work closely with us to provide training facilities and placements.

There is an indication that relations between businesses and the Jobcentres are weak, with what is deemed over bureaucratic processes which delay decisions and incur unnecessary costs to employ. The businesses are also reluctant to interface with multiple departments, EG Connexions, Colleges, Jobcentres when they would rather operate through one interface such as an employment agency.

Perhaps there are opportunities to consider alternative interfaces with local businesses, EG

- An independent neighbourhood employment agency, perhaps a social enterprise.
- The deployment of a jobcentre resource onto the business park and developing local business interfaces to meet the needs.

### **3.1 Employment Opportunities - Supporting Actions**

- Identify local unemployment statistics
- Identify local business skills, current and future
- Undertake Gap analyses
- Identify current and future training needs (produce skills matrix )
- Identify current & future business growth (produce growth matrix)
- Identify future social enterprise opportunities (produce SE matrix)

- Establish relationships with local business parks (Sign on to Employment charters)
- Establish relationships with future businesses (sign on to labour agreements)
- Review business rates and consider incentives to encourage local employment
- Promoting campaigns via schools to promote opportunities

#### 4. Benefit Rationalisation

This section is yet to be developed and requires input from partners such as CWAC Benefits and Adult services. In the meantime, listed below are some thoughts for consideration:

- Implementing new coalition benefits programme
- Identifying families at risk and refer them to the family support programme (see section 5)
- Use of benefits data to target most at risk families via a 'think family' approach.
- Using benefits resource to work with agreed families.

About 7% of the working age population of Northwich and Rural North APB were claiming Incapacity Benefit / Severe Disability Allowance (IB/SDA). 44% of these were for mental health conditions. <sup>[3]</sup>

#### Lower Super Output Areas <sup>[3]</sup>

LSOAs are split to have a typical residential population of 1500 (min.1000)

- Leftwich, Rudheath & Witton L3 LSOA had the highest proportion of benefit claimants (28%).
- Frodsham L1 has the highest proportion of Incapacity Benefit / Severe Disability Allowance claimants in the APB at (17%)

#### Housing benefit and Council tax benefit claimants 2011 <sup>[4]</sup>

	<i>HB</i>	<i>CT</i>
Witton and Rudheath Ward	11.5%	13.6%
Winnington and Castle Ward	11.1%	12.3%

CWACC average 7.9% 10.0%

*(Claimant rates are calculated as a percentage of the population aged 16 and over)*

#### 4.1 Benefit Rationalisation – Supporting actions

- Undertake survey of the key families in the neighbourhood.

## **5. Increasing Family Aspirations**

Throughout the above priorities and actions there is a recurring obligation to raise the aspirations and esteem of all those affected by unemployment, lack of qualifications and state dependency. There is also the strong links to other sub group issues relating to:

- Health and well being, (EG obesity, smoking, alcohol abuse)
- Crime and ASB (EG Lack of respect for others)
- Transport (EG sufficient facilities to get to work or training)
- Community engagement (EG Social integration)

Whilst a number of agencies and partners are actively involved in supporting individuals there is a pressing need to widen the support to families particularly those families where all, or most of members of the family are in need of support.

Systems are in place to identify individuals in need (EG Common Assessment Framework) but in order to begin to address some of the associated issues of long-term unemployment, Eg depression, lack of self-esteem, and other associated mental issues, we must also look towards developing a framework which will signpost families in need at an early stage of intervention in order to eliminate the:

- On-going cycle of re-active support costs
- generational continuance of worklessness
- barriers relating to the social development of children
- Worklessness Culture

### **5.1 Increasing Family Aspirations – Supporting Actions**

- Develop a family support programme (using the Oldham approach)
- Identify what existing processes are able to identify early family needs
- Identify key families in the area that could become part of a support programme
- Consider the development of a birth to employment model

[1] Department for Education – Performance Tables; [www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

[2] Connexions breakdown of NEET figures

[3] Northwich and Rural North Area Partnership Board Profile

[4] CWACC Ward Profiles

[5] Ward Unemployment (Claimant Count) Residence Based Estimates CWACC;  
[www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)