

12th December 2013

Agenda Item:4

REPORT OF THE GROUP MANAGER, CORPORATE STRATEGY**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE WORK CLUBS: PROGRESS UPDATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Committee on progress with the development of a network of work clubs in Nottinghamshire libraries and the achievements of the work clubs to date.

Information and Advice

2. Nottinghamshire County Council has funded work club activity in the County since 2010. There are now eight library based work clubs in the county

- Worksop (Thurs, 10-12)
- Retford (Fri, 10-12)
- Newark (Thurs, 10-12)
- Mansfield (Weds, 10-12)
- Kirkby (Fri, 10-12)
- Hucknall (Thurs, 3.30-5.30)
- Arnold (Tues, 1.30-3.30)
- West Bridgford (Mon, 2-4)

3. Discussions are underway to establish two further work clubs, in Beeston and Stapleford

4. The purpose of the work clubs is to offer a neutral space for unemployed people to come together to support each other in their journey back to work. The model has been developed around peer support and work club members motivating each other to search for work. The Nottinghamshire model has no eligibility criteria and is open to all. In addition to the two hour drop in session all the work clubs offer more structured sessions including

- CV writing
- Interview skills
- Jobsearch strategies
- Career planning
- Self promotion
- Dressing to impress
- Sessions led by local employers
- Steps 4 Success (a 6 hour motivational, confidence building course addressing barriers to employment. This is largely funded through the Adult and Community Learning Service.)

5. Using libraries as venues builds on the open access and supportive ethos of the Nottinghamshire work club network. The culture of job seeking is increasingly target driven both for those delivering support services and job seekers themselves. Our work clubs are not measured in the same way and are delivered as a county council service offering a supportive atmosphere which proves helpful to jobseekers. In addition, open access allows

people who are not claiming benefits but are looking for work and people looking to change jobs to access advice and support through the work clubs. The friendly and supportive nature of our work clubs creates a more conducive atmosphere for people to access the support on offer and motivates people to take the extra steps necessary in their job search.

6. The work clubs are supported by the Work Club Co-ordinator. This post is responsible for the development and delivery of the work clubs, supporting volunteers, organising work club activities and linking work clubs to local employment and skills provision. Additionally, this post is the key link between internal and external sources of support and accesses additional support identified as beneficial for work club members. It became clear early in the development of work clubs that the most important resource was the consistent presence of somebody who could direct sessions and be a contact point for work club activities.
7. Extending the work club network put pressure on the Work Club Co-ordinator in terms of supporting each work club each week. To resolve this, we have trained some library staff to support the work clubs. This ensures that a member of staff is available to lead the work clubs and free up the work club co-ordinator to develop new work clubs and build the programme of support across the work clubs as a whole. The library staff time is funded through the work club budget. Additional benefits of using library staff is that the work clubs and their members are more closely tied to other activities such as learning that are part of the core library offer.
8. Attendances at the work clubs are now averaging 250 per month. It tends to be older people accessing the work clubs and some common issues can be identified:
 - poor literacy and numeracy skills
 - poor IT skills and limited access to IT
 - health issues, both mental and physical
 - a growing number of people leaving the Work Programme after two years without securing a job
 - a growing number of people migrating from Incapacity Benefits to Jobseekers Allowance and being required to look for work. This group of people tend to have limited work experience
 - people ineligible to claim benefits and thus excluded from jobcentre support eg unable to access sector based work academies
 - poor/ineffective job search skills
9. The work clubs have been developed using limited resources in order to make them more sustainable. This has proved effective. Since the Council started to deliver work clubs, a number of funded work clubs offered by other organisations have come and gone. Funding the post of Work Club Co-ordinator through the County Council's own funds has provided a focus, a consistency and professionalism to the work clubs.

Future Developments

10. Additional sessions that would be beneficial to work club users are always in development. Future sessions may include
 - IT for job seekers (this has been trialled successfully in one work club but access to computers for the session is a limitation)
 - changing careers

- transferable skills
- health and work
- getting the best from the Jobcentre Plus offer

11. As indicated earlier in the report discussions are underway to extend work clubs to Beeston and Stapleford but this will stretch resources to their limit and it is unlikely further job clubs could be rolled out without additional investment. Equally additional activities or services that the work club could offer eg access to phones and printing would have resource implications.

12. The Work Club Co-ordinator already works closely with other teams within the authority, principally the Adult and Community Learning Service and i-works (which supports people with learning difficulties). It would be helpful to extend this joint working to build up the expertise available to work club clients, particularly in areas such as the newly-introduced universal credit.

Other Options Considered

13. None. The report is for noting.

Reason for Recommendation/s

14. To ensure that Committee Members are aware of the ongoing development of Work Clubs being delivered through the Council's Economic Development team.

Statutory and Policy Implications

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

16. Nottinghamshire Work Clubs are open to all Nottinghamshire residents, they are voluntary to attend and based in libraries which have open access

Financial Implications

17. Work Clubs have benefited from a £50,000 budget allocation in 2012-13 and 2013-14. This has enabled the continuation of the Co-ordinator post; purchasing additional hours of support from the library service and the purchase of laptops for use in the workclubs.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Members note the content of this report.

Report of the Group Manager, Corporate Strategy

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Trish Adams ext 72042

Constitutional Comments (NAB 29.11.13)

The report is for noting only. Economic Development Committee is empowered to receive and consider the report.

Financial Comments

Background Papers

NA

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All