

27th November 2012

Agenda Item: 5

REPORT OF THE GROUP MANAGER, CORPORATE STRATEGY

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE WORK CLUBS UPDATE ON PROGRESS

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 early 2011. The first Work Club operated out of the new Worksop Library. Since the outset, Work Clubs have been operated as a volunteer based model, with key volunteers being recruited to lead the development of work-based activity in their local areas. The first 12 months of Work Club activity were delivered by Self Help Nottingham, who has substantial experience of delivering volunteer based peer support groups. Successful work clubs were established in Worksop, Kirkby in Ashfield, Hucknall and Arnold.
3. Work clubs were originally set up through a commissioned third party arrangement which worked well in getting them off the ground but had limitations in terms of dedicated support for the work clubs. It also offered a mixed message about whether the work clubs were a Council service. Subsequently delivery of the work clubs was brought in house, as this also offered better value for money.
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 relies heavily on peer support and key volunteers, who are key to motivating attendees to proactively search for work. The Nottinghamshire model has no eligibility criteria, meaning that whatever benefit people receive, they are welcome to attend. Over the course of the first year of operation, it became clear that the main focus of the work clubs should be on:
 - a. CV writing and application processes
 - b. Interview skills and confidence building
 - c. Jobsearch strategies
 - d. Managing health issues in the workplace
5. To bring more structured and consistent support to the work clubs a Work Club Co-ordinator was appointed by the County Council in May 2012. This enabled the development of a structured range of services and for the Nottinghamshire work clubs to be more clearly

badged as a Council service. Two additional work clubs have since opened in Newark and Mansfield libraries.

6. Since the appointment of the work club co-ordinator there have been:

- a. Over 600 attendances at the work clubs;
- b. 17 work club members have secured employment; and
- c. 3 people have taken up training opportunities.

It is likely that the numbers of people moving into work or training following work club support is higher than this but not everybody lets the work club know they have secured employment.

7. Additional activities introduced into the work clubs by the work club co-ordinator include

- Local employers describing how to secure employment. Sessions have been delivered by Laing O'Rourke and Sainsbury's and have been well received
- CV workshops
- Health at work sessions
- Sessions by Jobcentre Plus staff about local opportunities

8. A pilot 'Steps4Success' motivational course has been designed and delivered by Mansfield CVS using funding from our Adult and Community Learning Service. The first course was delivered at the Kirkby work club, 10 people attended and of these 2 have found work and another person has taken significant steps to get closer to the jobs market. A second course will be delivered in December for Titchfield and Oakham Children Centres.

9. Work clubs are open to anyone but members do tend to be older people. Some issues common to the work club members which pose problems for them in their job search include a high level of IT illiteracy; many older members do not have easy access to IT or an understanding of basic IT skills. This is a barrier because job search and application processes are increasingly on-line. The work club co-ordinator and volunteers are designing a simple course to introduce IT to jobseekers which will be delivered this year.

10. Many of our work club members are anxious about how to manage health issues in work and this creates a barrier to successful job search and can lead to depression and other mental health conditions. The Nottinghamshire Fit for Work Service has developed a session for work clubs members about managing health conditions at work.

11. Crucial to the success of the work clubs is the role of volunteers. Each work club requires two key members to be available at sessions to set up, meet and greet, offer support and advice to other work club members and to act as the link to the co-ordinator. The skills developed in the role as key volunteer help these members to find work and nurturing new volunteers is an on-going process. The co-ordinator is working with our Community Engagement Officers to identify new volunteers both to support existing work clubs and to establish new ones in other areas.

12. Access to Information Technology (computers and printers) plays an important part in the work clubs and in those libraries where IT is available in the meeting room it works well. However not all libraries have IT available and we are discussing with colleagues in ICT how we can supply IT access to our work clubs.

13. Attached to this report are comments from current work club members which demonstrate how the Nottinghamshire Work Clubs are valued by people who use them.

Future Developments

14. 'Steps4Success' will be rolled out to other work clubs and also childrens centres if the pilot course in Titchfield proves effective. This motivational workshop model has been used with young people in the past and we are exploring whether a Steps4Success course can be delivered to NCC apprentices towards the end of their time with the authority to support them in securing employment on leaving the authority. The young apprentices would be encouraged to form a work club following the course.
15. The work club co-ordinator is working with Jobcentre Plus and colleagues in the Young People's service to explore establishing a young people's work club. A young people's work club would not readily lend itself to the self help model and would require more on-going support. There may be opportunities under the Youth Contract to take this forward.
16. Since the appointment of the co-ordinator the work clubs have become more structured and an effective programme of support has been developed for work club users. Good links have been made with a range of partners which has resulted in tailored sessions being developed and delivered. Activities in the pipeline include further 'Steps4Success' workshops, developing members' IT skills, continued input from employers and developing a support offer for work club volunteers.
17. The key to the success of the work clubs this year is dedicated support provided through the co-ordinator post, which has brought stability to existing work clubs, developed new clubs and accessed external resources. The benefits of this role are clear in terms of on-going attendance at work clubs and positive job and training outcomes. A good working relationship with external partners ensures that work club members are able to access new opportunities as they arise in their area.

Other Options Considered

18. None. The report is for noting.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

19. 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

20. 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.

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

Financial Implications

22. Work Clubs have benefited from a £50,000 budget allocation in 2012-13. This has enabled the creation of the co-ordinator post, access to funds for training and the planned development of Enterprise Clubs.

23. Members will consider any future financial implications of the Work Club model during the agenda item on 2013 – 14 budget allocations.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Members note the content of this report.

Report of the Chairman of the Economic Development Committee

For any enquiries about this report please contact: Matt Lockley ext 72446

Constitutional Comments (KK 19.11.2012)

The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Economic Development Committee.

Financial Comments (DJK 15.11.2012)

The contents of this report are duly noted; the financial funding has been identified within the report.

Background Papers

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All

Nottinghamshire Work Clubs (w/c 15.10.12)

“Why do you find our work clubs useful and valuable?”

Work Club Member responses:

“Encourages people to explore their skills and use their abilities to network “

“Provide a service that JCP do not provide, and resources they do not provide including access to the internet, help with CV’s, letter writing and job searches.”

“Free access to the help you need when looking for work and have no money. Extremely valuable financially”

“Help searching for jobs and additional help eg CV – never had a CV – but now need one”

“Access to new information through meeting people, ie jobs, support, local opportunities”

“Good interaction with other members”

“Feel more positive after being here today”

“Gives you the confidence to help others”

“More friendly atmosphere than the job centre”

“It has given me confidence.... I feel more welcomed and confident at the work club”

“Nice to be in the company of people in the same situation as yourself”

“Near to home. Can collect information regarding jobs and training”

“Meet new friends, use the internet. I can’t afford the internet at home”

“Support with CSV’s, letters and applications”

“Learn about jobs from other people”

“After attending Kirkby work club a number of times I have had lots of help and advice with CV’s, and job searches in a friendly atmosphere”

“Get together with other like minded people in the same position as you, bouncing ideas off each other”

“When I am at the work club it makes me feel better about myself and job searching in general”

"I have attended Kirkby and Mansfield work clubs from their beginnings and have found I have gained confidence. I have enjoyed listening to the different speakers and the Steps 4 Success which I found enlightening. Help with CV's and job searching has been very valuable"

Key Volunteer Comments

"Difference between this and other work clubs is this is more flexible, no time limits and is peer supported. People can come and go as they please. It is community based"

"Morale and confidence booster for everybody"

"I have found being a volunteer extremely helpful and informative. I have met some wonderful people and made some wonderful friends. I feel the value of help including CV's, job searching, applications etc is much needed."