

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement

Meeting to be held on 30 January 2014

Electoral Division affected: All

European Social Fund: Project for Young People who are, or are at Risk of being, Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) 2011/2013 - Performance Update

(Appendices 'A' and 'B' refer)

Contact for further information:

Mike Heaton, (01772) 531842, Directorate for Children and Young People,
mike.heaton2@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

This report responds to two key actions arising from previous reports overseen by the Cabinet Committee. These actions are:

1. providing an update on performance of the European Social Fund Not in Employment, Education or Training Project 2011/13. This update covers the validated data period of 1 September 2011 to 20 December 2013.
2. provide an outline of delivery performance (Appendix A) and example case studies (Appendix B)

Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement is asked to note and comment on the reported good progress and performance of the project.

1. Background and Advice

In November 2010 Lancashire County Council facilitated a 'Partnership' responding to an invitation to tender by the ¹Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency for European Social Funding (ESF) aimed at reducing the number of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

Lancashire's response to the tender specification was to bring together Lancashire County Council services with key stakeholders from further education, work-based learning providers and voluntary and community groups to strategically provide an inclusive and integrated model to reducing Young People who are NEET or are at risk of being NEET.

¹ Lancashire County Council is under contract with the Skills Funding Agency who determines outcomes to be delivered.

The Partnership agreed that support to young people in breaking down their barriers to participating in learning, training or employment should be planned over a period of time (either six, twelve or eighteen weeks) and that each engagement activity should build upon each other rather than be stand alone activities with no progression. An example of this is personal and social development energiser activities helping to build confidence leading to employability, literacy and numeracy activities to build competence which can lead to vocational qualifications that support their career aspirations and interests.

A bid was submitted by the County Council and accepted in full by the Skills Funding Agency.

In July 2011 the County Council received its contract from the Skills Funding Agency after a delayed procurement process of over nine months.

1.1. Service aims

The Service aim is to reduce the number of young people, aged 14-18 (or up to 25 for young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities) in Lancashire (12 districts), who are at risk of becoming, or are, NEET. This is in order to improve their education, employability and personal skills and to enable them to successfully progress into work or further learning or training.

1.2. Funding, target number of young people to be helped and outcomes:

The total contract value is now £3,731m targeting a minimum of 1,871 young people over three years. This new contract value represents an increase from the original contract value of £3,557m targeting 1621 young people which was a result of exceeding previous performance expectations. The number of young people to be targeted is prescribed by the Skills Funding Agency.

- Outcomes are defined by the Skills Funding Agency, using their terminology, in the form of deliverables, achievement of these deliverables draws down funding. Key outcomes are accreditation and progression into work, learning or training.
- Appendix 'A' shows the profile for the delivery of this work with the Skills Funding Agency. A narrative is provided describing what these deliverables mean.

1.3. Timeline of this project

The ESF calendar runs from January to December. This project should have commenced in January 2011 and is scheduled to cease in December 2013.

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2011	Planned start								Actual start*			
2012												
2013												End*

*A protracted procurement process managed by the Skills Funding Agency meant activity and the engagement of young people in Lancashire did not commence until

September 2011. We have and continue to present a case to the Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency for the lost time to be added to the end of the project giving the County Council the full three years to deliver the service aims as described in the invitation to tender. The project end date is December 2013.

1.4. Geography

Young People must reside in one of the 12 County Council districts to be eligible for support with priority being placed on supporting those most disadvantaged who reside in deprived areas where there are high levels of NEET.

2. Performance to date

2.1. Activities within this ESF NEET programme are prescribed by the EU and the Skills Funding Agency (SfA) within the following framework:

Activities within the programme last on average twelve weeks.

They are designed to help young people to progress into learning or work and to achieve a qualification.

A typical programme will have the following elements:

- a period of assessment of the young person's needs and identification of any barriers to learning or progression leading to the production of an individual action plan;
- if necessary a period of different activities designed to re-motivate and build the confidence and self esteem of the young person;
- one to one support and mentoring;
- information, advice and guidance (IAG);
- learning leading to the achievement of a qualification;
- support to address the issues that may be preventing the young person from progressing and to address specific needs;
- work experience or the opportunity to trial different occupations;
- support in progressing into learning or work.

Appendix B provides example case studies to aid understanding and impact of activities on young people.

Lancashire County Council, as part of its contract with the SfA, is expected to meet the following headline outcomes over the life of the project (see table 2.2 below).

2.2. Table of performance up to 20 Dec 2013

Outcome description	Total number of young people to be supported by Dec 2013	Number of outcomes achieved by LCC up to end 20 December 2013		Is this ahead or behind planned delivery profile?
		Profile	Actual	
Number of young people to start the programme. (YP to be assessed, action plans and support put in place)	1,871	1,871	2,148	Ahead*
Number of young people in a Vulnerable Groups category (Young mum, young offender, Looked after child, Learners with learning difficulty/disability)	556	556	648	Ahead*
Number of young people to achieve an accredited qualification of at least 45 guided learning hours	1,141	1,141	1,151	Ahead *
Number of young people who have progressed into further learning, training or employment	918	918	1,092	Ahead*
Project evaluation (N/A at this time, relates to project close)	N/A	N/A		N/A
Impact monitoring report (quarterly)	LCC meet with SFA	LCC meet with SFA on a regular basis		N/A
Service level agreement/contracts in place	-	All subcontractor contracts in place		As planned

*please see supporting narrative below (2.3)

2.3. Performance Overview

Lancashire County Council has over achieved all of its targets and achieved in full the service aim to reduce the number of young people, aged 14-18 (or up to 25 for young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities) in Lancashire (12 districts), who are at risk of becoming, or are, NEET.

The NEET performance has improved considerably compared with 2011/12, the start of this programme. The NEET numbers have reduced from 2643 in 2011/13 to 2000, a reduction of 643. Please see table below:

Table of 16-18 old NEET and Not Known Performance.

		NEET			Not Known		
		Nov 13-Jan 14 (provisional)	Nov 12-Jan 13	Nov 11-Jan 12	Nov 13-Jan 14 (provisional)	Nov 12-Jan 13	Nov 11-Jan 12
November	Numbers	1812	2183	2569	3371	2384	1821
December	Numbers	2081	2247	2661	4017	2224	1174
January	Numbers	2108	2402	2696	9406	2237	1988
3 month Average Performance (Nov 13 - Jan 14)	Numbers	2000	2278	2643	5598	2282	1661

Subcontractor infrastructure, their strategies and processes have become more effective, with Council support, as is their capacity to identify, engage and support young people within this priority group.

This success and strength of partnership with subcontractors will prove beneficial in moving into the next two years. The Council has successfully won a two-year contract to support young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

The bid for the European Social Fund (ESF) funding was led by Lancashire County Council and covers the adjoining local authority areas of Blackburn, Blackpool and Cumbria.

Nearly £2m will be spent to support 1000 young people across these areas between the ages of 14 and 19. The money will also be used to support people with disabilities or learning disabilities up to the age of 24, who are NEET or are at risk of becoming NEET.

Under the new contract which will start in the near future, the Council will continue to work with key partner organisations including further education colleges, work-based learning providers and voluntary and community groups. Young people will be involved in learning and partners will work with them to keep them engaged and support their progress into further education or employment with training.

Activities will be designed to help young people gain a greater understanding of their own abilities, learning needs and the range of opportunities available to them. This will include support with:

- one-to-one mentoring, assessment and information;
- an individual programme of support and training;
- advice and guidance sessions to identify any problems with learning or work;
- literacy, numeracy and ICT skills that will build competence;

- work experience and 'job sampling' with interviews and career planning support.

As the organisation leading the bid, the county council will work closely with the other local authorities and all training providers to manage the help and advice services for the young people in all areas.

3. Consultations

N/A

4. Implications:

N/A

5. Risk Management

The distribution of resources was a potential area of conflict between partners but careful consideration, consultation and full engagement of partners has minimised this possibility. No challenges or issues have been raised since the project commenced.

Detailed contracting arrangements with all subcontractors include performance management reviews which assess whether subcontractors are acting upon key messages regarding performance and delivery. Performance Management Reviews of Subcontractors cover the elements listed below. This along with analysis of data/intelligence will inform wider planning which may result in a +/- variance to subcontractor volumes and additional engagement strategies, which may include bringing in additional providers where demand and expertise is required.

Performance Management Reviews:
Review of subcontractor delivery model
Review of funding, payment, volumes & deliverables
Individualised Learner Record/Beneficiary List returns
Audit of evidence supporting Individualised Learner Record /Beneficiary List returns
Reporting & evaluation activities

Robust performance management and effective building of relationships by the Learning and Skills Team have ensured performance is positive. The project is currently in its closer stage (all delivery with young people to cease by December 2013 with data reconciliation periods permitted until March 2014). Risk is currently negligible.

6. Financial

The financial risk to the Council is minimal as Partners will only receive payment on achievement of results, this being the way that the SfA provide funding and how the risk of claw back of funds from the Authority are mitigated.

As part of the project set up, all partners are required to have a robust audit process and financial systems in place to meet the requirements of ESF/Skills Funding Agency Auditors.

This project was audited by the Provider Financial Assurance Team of the Skills Funding Agency in August 2012. The Chief Executive of the County Council received a final audit report on 6 Sept 2012. The report concluded the County Council has substantially met the contractual requirements attached to the payments and that we have used the money in a way that is consistent with the purposes for which it was intended. In addition to this the Council has also undergone two European audits, an Article 13 and Article 16, both of which we passed with zero errors.

7. Legal

All subcontractors have been issued with a legally binding contract.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
Report to the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement - LCC ESF for young people who are, or at risk, of being Not in Education, Employment or Training	24 November 2011	Dave Gorman, Office of Chief Executive, (01772) 534261
Report to the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement - LCC ESF for young people who are, or at risk, of being Not in Education, Employment or Training	7 October 2011	Dave Gorman, Office of Chief Executive, (01772) 534261
Report to the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement - LCC ESF for young people who are, or at risk, of being Not in Education, Employment or Training	3 July 2012	Dave Gorman, Office of Chief Executive, (01772) 534261
Report to the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement - LCC ESF for young people who are, or at risk, of being Not in Education, Employment or Training	17 Jan 2013	Dave Gorman, Office of Chief Executive, (01772) 534261

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

NA