



The Sustainable Community Strategy

for Halton

2011 – 2016

Mid-year Progress Report







01st April – 30th Sept 2012

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This report provides a summary of progress in relation to the achievement of targets within Halton’s Sustainable Community Strategy 2011 - 2016.

It provides both a snapshot of performance for the period 1st April 2011 to 30th September 2012 and a projection of expected levels of performance to the year-end.



The following symbols have been used to illustrate current performance as against the 2012 target and as against performance for the same period last year.

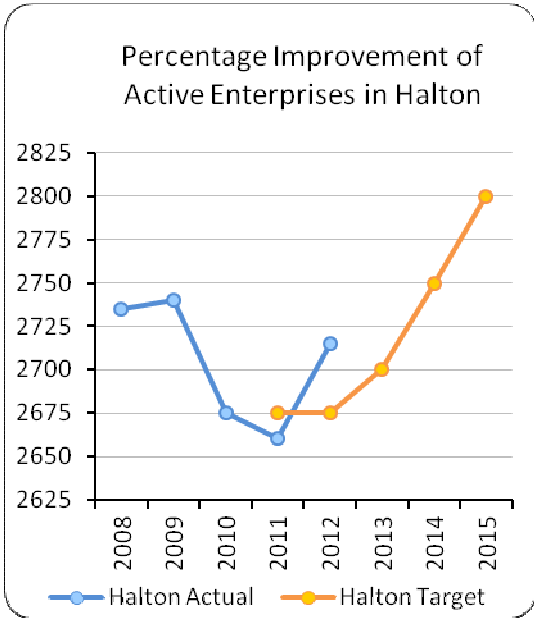
	Target is likely to be achieved or exceeded.		Current performance is better than this time last year
	The achievement of the target is uncertain at this stage		Current performance is the same as this time last year
	Target is highly unlikely to be / will not be achieved.		Current performance is worse than this time last year

Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Page	Ref	Descriptor	2012 / 13 Target	Direction of Travel
4	ELS 1	Increase the number of active enterprises within the Borough (NEW 2011)		
6	ELS 2	Increase the proportion of business diversity (NEW 2011)		
8	ELS 3	Increase the number of people classed as self-employed (NEW 2011)		
9	ELS 4	Reduce the proportion of people with no qualifications		
11	ELS 5	Increase the percentage of people achieving NVQ Level 4 and above (Revised NI 165)		
12	ELS 6	Increase the percentage of adults using a library (NI 9)		
14	ELS 7	Reduce the percentage of people registered unemployed and seeking employment (JSA claimants) (NI 152)		
17	ELS 8	Reduce the percentage of the working age population claiming out of work benefits (Revised measure)		
19	ELS 9	Increase the gross weekly earnings by residents (NI166)	N/A	N/A
20	ELS 10	Increase the number of residents accessing welfare rights/ debt advice at a casework level (Local Measure) a) Debt b) Welfare Rights		

SCS / ELS1 Increase the number of active enterprises within the Borough (New measure)

	2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Target	2012/13 Qtr 2	2012/13 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
	2660	2675	2715			
Data Commentary:						
Used to show growth of active enterprises within the Borough.						
Information from Table B1.1: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/bus-register/uk-business/index.html (2012) and NOMIS website						
Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed.						
Data for 2011 released on 05/10/2012, via the above link.						
Performance Commentary:						
Quarter two figure is the latest available data reported for 2011/12.						



Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

To complement the business start-up measures described in ELS-1 the Borough Council are contracted to provide support to SME's, who have been in existence for more than one year and a day, under ERDF Priority 4.2

Liverpool City Council is the 'accountable body' for the 'Merseyside Business Support ERDF Programme'. Delivery across the City Region will be through 13 partner agencies. Halton Borough Council and St Helens and Halton CVS are responsible for delivery within the Borough

The Halton element will deliver an initial evaluation followed by either the provision of a professional business mentor or more specific intervention which meets the particular needs of individual businesses.

The programme will, therefore, focus upon **second stage growth** and as such will seek to engage with established SME's who have the ambition and capability to grow and expand.

It is anticipated that the following outputs will be achieved :-

Businesses assisted to improve their performance	146
Number of businesses with improved performance	94
Jobs created	115

Jobs safeguarded

60

Commencement of the programme has been backdated to July 16 2012. Project completion will be June 30 2014.

The Borough Council have also engaged with the private sector deliverers of the government's 'Growth Accelerator' programme

Formerly, the 'High Growth Programme' government invited the private sector to tender for the delivery of the 'Growth Accelerator'. The contract was awarded to Grant Thornton, Oxford Innovation, PERA and Winning Pitch.

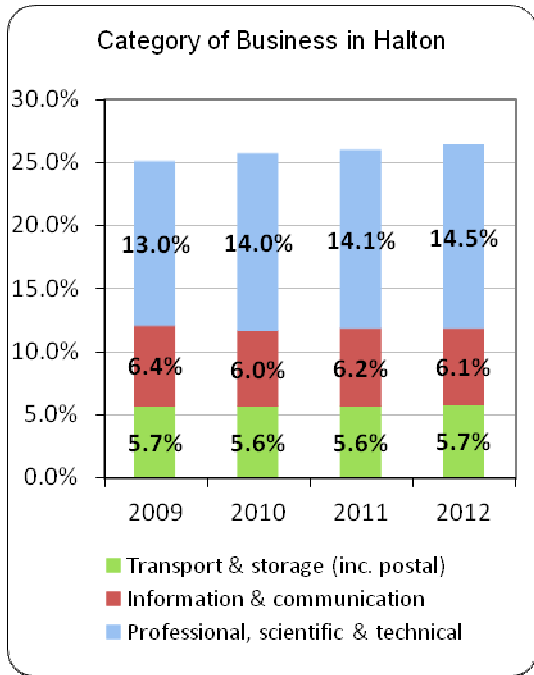
The Growth Accelerator is available only for 'companies with genuine potential for rapid and sustainable growth. Businesses with the capacity, commitment and intent to double turnover or employment within three years'.

The Borough Council are working with Winning Pitch and PERA locally to target companies who will benefit for the intensive coaching programme associated with the Growth Accelerator

SCS / ELS2

Increase the proportion of business diversity in the following sectors: (New Measure)

- Knowledge / Economy,
- Super port
- Low Carbon/ green
- Visitor Economy



2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Target	2012/13 Qtr 2	2012/13 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
25.94% (2011)	24% (2012)	26.34% (March 2012)			

Data Commentary:

The measure is in line with the Liverpool City Region priority agreed sectors for growth.

Standard categories are used to classify businesses, which enables diversity of business within the local area to be measured. These particular categories have been chosen as areas of focus for growth and as representative of the four larger sectors within the local area. The following standard categories have been chosen as a proxy for these priorities:

- Professional, Scientific and Technical
- Information and Communication
- Transport and Storage

Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed.

Performance Commentary:

Quarter two figure is the latest available data reported for 2011/12.

Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

- Start-up Cheshire and the DWP’s New Enterprise Allowance scheme are available to Halton residents who are interested in self-employment
- HBC’s Enterprise Officers to deliver one-to-one business start-up advice to Halton residents through Halton People into Job’s Enterprising Halton Service
- HBC’s Enterprise Officers to provide practical support to individuals with business planning, cash flow forecast, access to funding/grants, networking, banking, marketing, insurance and HMRC advice

- Halton People into Jobs to continue to deliver the bespoke '*Kick Start*' course which provides participants with a more detailed overview and understanding of what is involved in running their own business or becoming self-employed
- HBC's Enterprise Officers to work with Council's Investment and Development Services to source appropriate premises for new starts up to deliver their new business from
- HBC's Enterprise Officers to work closely with the Council's Trade and Liaison/Regeneration Officer to promote Widnes/Runcorn Markets as being suitable venues for new start ups
- HBC's Enterprise Officers to continue to work in partnership with key organisations that provide Enterprise services across Halton i.e. Princes Trust, Blue Orchid, Riverside College and Halton Chamber of Commerce to ensure that local residents receive the most appropriate service to meet their individual needs
- Key partners to work together to actively promote Global Entrepreneurship Week (12th -18th November 2012). The week will be used to raise the profile of enterprise and self-employment services across Halton to increase the number of people being self-employed to achieve the annual target of 6.5%

SCS / ELS3 Increase the number of people classed as self-employed (New measure)

Number of people classed as self-employed	2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Target	2012/13 Qtr 2	2012/13 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
	5.7% (October to September 11)	6.5%	6.4% (July 11 - June 12)		?	↑
Data Commentary:						
To show that the authority is supporting entrepreneurship by showing how much Halton has increased the number of people classed as self-employed. Source NOMIS: % self-employed of those aged 16-64.						
Self-employed information for the borough is available from the NOMIS website via the annual Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES). This measure is reported between September and December for the previous year.						
Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed.						

Performance Commentary:

The latest data available from ONS relates to 2011/2012. However, 18 learners accessing HPIJ’s Enterprising Halton service have become self-employed during Quarter 2.

Actual data for 2012/2013 will not be available from ONS until June 2013.

Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

- Start-up Cheshire and the DWP’s New Enterprise Allowance scheme are available to Halton residents who are interested in self-employment
- HBC’s Enterprise Officers to deliver one-to-one business start-up advice to Halton residents through Halton People into Job’s Enterprising Halton Service
- HBC’s Enterprise Officers to provide practical support to individuals with business planning, cash flow forecast, access to funding/grants, networking, banking, marketing, insurance and HMRC advice
- Halton People into Jobs to continue to deliver the bespoke ‘Kick Start’ course which provides participants with a more detailed overview and understanding of what is involved in running their own business or becoming self-employed
- HBC’s Enterprise Officers to work with Council’s Investment and Development Services to source appropriate premises for new starts up to deliver their new business from
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SCS / ELS4 Reduce the proportion of people with no qualifications.

	2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Target	2012/13 Qtr 2	2012/13 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
<p>Percentage of people with no qualifications</p>	12.8% (Jan to Dec 2010)	12%	11.5% (Jan to Dec 2011)			
Data Commentary:						
<p>To show that Halton is fostering a culture where learning is valued this indicator would assist by showing the number of residents without any qualifications decreasing.</p> <p>Source: ONS annual population survey (latest survey 2010)</p> <p>% is a proportion of resident population of area aged 16-64</p> <p>Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed.</p>						

Performance Commentary:

During April 2012 to September 2012, The Employment, Learning and Skills Division supported in the achievement of 121 Skills for Life qualifications, broken down as follows:

Literacy

- 1 learner achieved Entry Level 2 Literacy
- 7 learners achieved Entry Level 3 Literacy
- 14 learners achieved Level 1 Literacy
- 28 learners achieved Level 2 Literacy

Numeracy

- 3 learners achieved Entry Level 2 Numeracy
- 11 learners achieved Entry Level 3 Numeracy
- 18 learners achieved Level 1 Numeracy
- 38 learners achieved Level 2 Numeracy

Data from other providers in the borough is reported to Skills Funding Agency; however, this data is not publicly available until 18 months afterwards.

Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

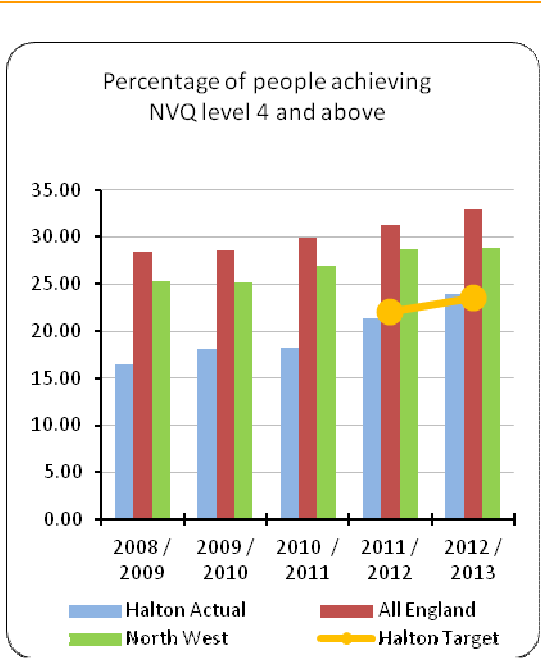
- Riverside College is developing courses in conjunction with the local housing trusts to reach members of the community who have a history of low engagement. Riverside College has developed, and is recruiting to, an 'unlock your potential' confidence building course that is designed as a first step into education and training.
- Riverside College's management of bursary support, including support for students needing childcare, is

providing the opportunity for students who otherwise would be unable to study to engage with education and training.

- The Employment, Learning and Skills Division has delivered 82 Skills for Life and Employability programmes from April to September 2012, broken down as follows:
 - 29 Literacy
 - 38 Numeracy
 - 15 Employability/HEP courses
- Following the withdrawal of funding for the Adult Literacy and Numeracy qualifications from August 2012, the Skills for Life and Employability team has introduced Functional Skills in English and maths. It is expected that learners will take longer to achieve the new qualifications and the majority of new learners have an estimated end date of July 2013, although some learners have an estimated end date of March 2013.

SCS / ELS5

Increase the percentage of people achieving NVQ Level 4 and above (Revised NI 165)



2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Target	2012/13 Qtr 2	2012/13 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
21.3% (Jan to Dec 2010)	23.5%	24.0% (Jan to Dec 2011)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Data Commentary:

Showing the number of people achieving NVQ Level 4 and above qualifications show that residents within the borough are reaching a high level of educational attainment. NVQ4 equivalent and above: e.g. HND, Degree and Higher Degree level qualifications or equivalent

Source: ONS annual population survey

% is a proportion of resident population of area aged 16-64

Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed.

Performance Commentary:

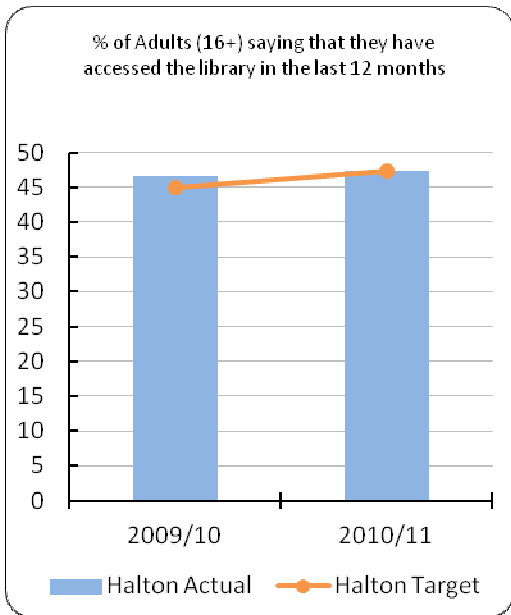
HBC does not own this NI data which is only available from the Skills Funding Agency 18 months after learners achieve the qualification

Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

A progression system has been implemented at Riverside College whereby students have the opportunity to enter education and training at any level and progress to higher level study as they are supported through the curriculum.

SCS / ELS6

Increase the percentage of adults using a library (Replacement measure for NI 9)



Data for collected nationally from the last, Use of Public Library surveys through the Sport England Active People Survey, discontinued in 2010.

2010 = 47.3%

2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Target	2012/13 Qtr 2	2012/13 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
Adult 95% Children 86%	Maintain position in Top Quartile in the Region for Satisfaction	Adult 94%		✓	↓

Data Commentary:

As NI 9 – the Use of public libraries which was collected through the Sport England Active People Survey was discontinued in 2010, a replacement measure has been hence agreed.

The CIPFA Public Library Users Survey (PLUS) measures user satisfaction levels of various aspects of the service ranging from opening hours, standard of customer care, computer facilities, book stock etc and is undertaken for Adults and Children once every three years.

The Adult survey was undertaken in October 2012 and the last Children’s survey was undertaken in 2010. The survey’s will be repeated in Autumn 2013 (Children’s) and Autumn 2015 (Adults) The indicator to be used is the proportion, who view their library as Very Good/Good (Over 16’s) / proportion who view their library as Good (Under 16).

Performance Commentary:

Adult – Actual performance 12-13 - Proportion who view their library as Very Good/Good - 94%, whilst this still records a very high level of satisfaction this is down by 1% from the previous survey which reflects the changes to levels of provision i.e. reduced opening hours

Children – Baseline data - Proportion who view their library as Good - 86%, target 1% increase in 2013.

The target will be to maintain /improve upon performance in for Adults and Children from 2013 to 2015 in Halton and remain in the top quartile in the region in terms of Public Library User Satisfaction.

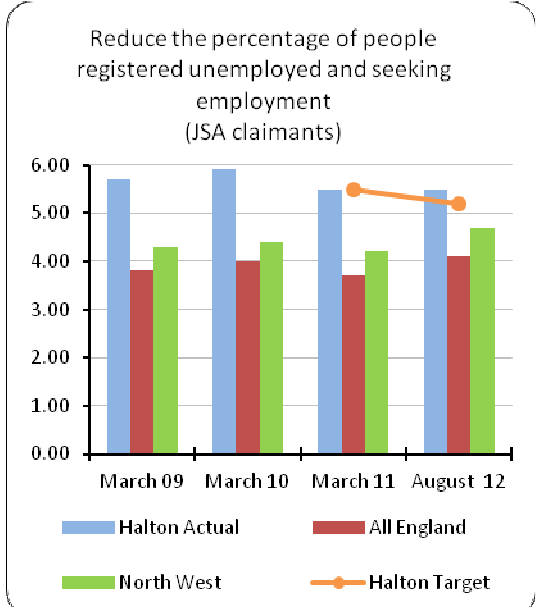


Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

To increase the percentage of people using a library an number of initiatives have been undertaken during the year to date:

- Library Strategy being developed which will define the priorities of the service over the next 3-4 years including standards of service
- Delivering Lottery Project at Halton Lea Library which focusses on older people and has established the building as a key facilitator for access to information, support for IT and a hub for social interaction – IT and Biscuits, Dementia Café, Reading Groups to support mental wellbeing
- Reading Families Project – national project working with publishers to promote and encourage reading as a family activity, improving digital skills and exploring the use of social media to raise the profile of the service and to promote reading for pleasure
- Delivered new library facility in Runcorn; self-service library resource facilities established at Castlefields Community Centre
- Delivered the Summer Reading Challenge which encourages children to continue reading over the summer
- Community Pathfinders signposting to help and support for employment and training
- Digital Job Hubs now being delivered at Halton Lea and Widnes Libraries
- Continued delivery of story time, Class Visits and other reading activities and events for children and young people.

SCS / ELS7

Reduce the percentage of people registered unemployed and seeking employment (JSA claimants) NI 152

 <p>Reduce the percentage of people registered unemployed and seeking employment (JSA claimants)</p>	2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Target	2012/13 Qtr 2	2012/13 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
<p>5.8% (March 2012)</p>	<p>5.2% (March 2013)</p>	<p>5.5% (August 2012)</p>				
<p>Data Commentary:</p>						
<p>JSA claimant count records the number of people claiming Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) and National Insurance credits at Jobcentre Plus local offices. People claiming JSA must declare that they are out of work, capable of, available for and actively seeking work during the week in which the claim is made.</p> <p>The percentage figures express the number of claimants resident in an area as a percentage of the population aged 16-64 resident in that area. Data is available one month in arrears.</p> <p>Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed.</p>						
<p>Performance Commentary:</p>						
<p>During August 2012 Halton's JSA claimant count was 4262 a decrease of 2.3% on the previous month and the same as August 2011. The JSA Count is 5.5% of Halton's working age population.</p>						

Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

Jobcentre Plus (JCP) is an active member of all ELS & SSP sub-groups and on both of the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Groups to support vulnerable customers. They are working with National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) promoting Apprenticeships with employers, as well as Supporting 50+ customers with Jobsearch advice and IT skills.

A Data Sharing Protocol being established to allow more freedom & flexibility of JCP sharing customer details to support moving customers closer to the Labour Market.

There is a workshop planned for November 2012 with Agencies to improve services to residents.

JCP are working with local partners including Registered Social Landlords (RSL) to look at the digital agenda for residents in readiness of the Welfare Reform.

Jobcentre Plus had 6493 notified vacancies for Halton in the period April 2012 to August 2012

The Governments 'Get Britain Working' measure have seen an increase from April to September with:

Work Experience – 136 placements with 168 starts

Sector-Based Work Academies (SBWA) – 82 (across Merseyside) 5

Work Clubs – 8 (2 specialist for Ashley House & Probation)

Digital Job Hubs – 2 (Library Service)

Enterprise Clubs – 3

(HBC launching Digital Hubs & RSL's in Castlefields launching Digital Job Hub in October)

Jobcentre Plus utilising New Enterprise Allowance for customers who are interested in self-employment.

JCP have hosted a logistics event with 25 employers attending with 70 representatives from across employer and partner organisations.

JCP are in discussions with Skills for Logistics re: setting up logistics academy.

Jobcentre Plus is also working with HBC transport team to try to improve access to employers boarding outskirts of Halton.

JCP Advisers are in Children's Centres to offer advice and support to customers

National Careers Service sit in each of the Jobcentres to offer careers advice

Back to Work Sessions for newly unemployed customers taking place via each of the Jobcentres in the borough.

The delivery of Skills for Life Assessments are offered throughout the year and enable those claiming out of work benefits to be signposted to suitable courses and assist them in gaining the skills needed to gain employment. These courses cover a range of maths, English and employability programmes ran across the borough and are delivered by a range of partners including Halton Borough Council, Riverside College Halton, In Training, Power in Partnership, Asset Training, Scientiam and a number of other providers who receive Skills Funding Agency monies for such activity.

A number of IT drop in workshops have also been launched for any benefit claimant looking to be supported in job search and CV writing. These are offered by HBC

The DWP Single Work Programme is specifically targeted at those JSA claimants who have been unemployed for 9+ months. The mandated customers are assigned a personal advisor, have access to training and other support intervention such as travel, clothes vouchers and the National Careers Service are seen regularly by their advisor, who assists them in coming off benefits and moving into employment.

The Halton Employment Partnership Manager and Employer Engagement Team is meeting regularly with potential inward investors and existing employers to source job vacancies, apprenticeships, work experience and graduate internships, all to promote opportunities to JSA claimants

The creation of 70 business incentive grants to employers who take on an unemployed Halton resident as an apprentice will contribute to the numbers of JSA claimants being reduced. In addition, a £10k hardship funds for new apprentices will support them during their first month of employment for expenditure on items such as travel costs.

A Youth day planned for 20th November focusing supporting 18-24yr olds into employment and Halton's Riverside College is currently running CV Workshops.

JCP hosted an event with Skills Funding Agency (SFA) Providers to look at the Skill Conditionality offer across the Borough to ensure training is demand led cross referencing against Local Labour Market. Also, Riverside College has developed, and is recruiting to, a skills conditionality curriculum that allows JCP customers to up skill and plug any qualification gaps on their CVs. 263 referrals were made from JCP to the college in 11/12.

A work club is being developed at Castlefields community centre that will include input from the National Careers Service, Plus Dane and Liverpool Housing Trusts, and Riverside College.

A digital inclusion curriculum is being developed, and recruited to, at Riverside College. It provides members of the local community with the skills and IT access needed to apply for jobs electronically, and allows them to demonstrate the IT skills needed for the modern work place.

Adult recruitment at Riverside College has increased considerably with large numbers of adults accessing education and training delivered in vocationally specialist workshops by industry standard tutors.

Start Up Cheshire and the New Enterprise Allowance are available to Halton residents who are interested in self-employment.

HBC transport team are looking to improve access to employers bordering the outskirts of Halton.

Back to Work Sessions for newly unemployed customers taking place via each of the Jobcentres.

National Careers Service operates across Halton and is delivered by HBC's ELS division and Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership.

SCS / ELS8

Reduce the percentage of the working age population claiming out of work benefits
(Revised measure)

	2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Target	2012/13 Qtr 2	2012/13 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
	18.9% (August 2011)	18% (March 2012)	18.23% (August 2012)		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Data Commentary:						
<p>Out of work benefits includes Job seekers allowance, ESA (Incapacity Benefits), Lone parents and other income related benefits.</p> <p>Data is taken from the Department for work and Pensions claimant figures via the office of National statistics NOMIS reporting system.</p> <p>Data is available quarterly and is released six months in arrears.</p> <p>Targets based on current information and subject to known funding level. Targets will require review should funding or priorities be changed.</p>						

Performance Commentary:

August figures from JCP show that there are 4262 JSA claimants of work age from an overall working age population of 77,700. This compares to 18.9% for the same time last year.

Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

Jobcentre Plus (JCP) had 6493 notified vacancies for Halton in the period April 2012 to August 2012.

JCP work closely with all Halton Children Centres to support lone parents and families with jobsearch advice and support. Personal Advisers are currently undertaking outreach work in Runcorn\Widnes Children Centre's.

JCP will be conducting 4 'Group Sessions' across 4 Widnes Children Centres to support recruitments. The events will take place in partnership with National Adult Careers, Halton Borough Council's Adult Learning Team and Children Centres. To support customers with job search and learning.

Children Centres attend both Runcorn and Widnes Jobcentre Plus offices weekly to engage with lone parents and families to offer the support required.

Jobcentre Plus sit on the Advisory Boards of the Children Centre's to support Economic agenda.

Jobcentre Plus is working with the NHS on training provision for customers with health conditions.

Jobcentre Plus has membership of the Local Authorities Health and Child Poverty Groups.

IB reassessment is currently under way and will be completed by 2014. Customer moving onto the ESA (Work Related Activity Group) will be assigned a named Personal Adviser who will support customers to move them closer to the Labour market.

Jobcentre Plus has a Disability Employment Adviser in each site to support customers who require additional support to move closer to the labour market. There are programme such as Work Choices which support customers with the highest needs and helps move them into employment.

Access to Work can support customers with equipment requirements to support a return to employment for customers with disabilities.

SCS / ELS9 Increase the gross weekly earnings by residents (NI166)

	2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Target	2012/13 Qtr 2	2012/13 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel																									
<p>Gross weekly earnings of residents (£)</p> <table border="1"> <caption>Data for Gross weekly earnings of residents (£)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Halton Actual</th> <th>North West</th> <th>All England</th> <th>Halton Target</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2008</td> <td>£420.00</td> <td>£450.00</td> <td>£480.00</td> <td>£450.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2009</td> <td>£440.00</td> <td>£460.00</td> <td>£490.00</td> <td>£460.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2010</td> <td>£440.00</td> <td>£470.00</td> <td>£500.00</td> <td>£470.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2011</td> <td>£430.00</td> <td>£460.00</td> <td>£500.00</td> <td>£460.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Halton Actual	North West	All England	Halton Target	2008	£420.00	£450.00	£480.00	£450.00	2009	£440.00	£460.00	£490.00	£460.00	2010	£440.00	£470.00	£500.00	£470.00	2011	£430.00	£460.00	£500.00	£460.00	£432.30p (Dec 11)	Close gap with NW average	£432.30p (Dec 11)		N/A	N/A
Year	Halton Actual	North West	All England	Halton Target																											
2008	£420.00	£450.00	£480.00	£450.00																											
2009	£440.00	£460.00	£490.00	£460.00																											
2010	£440.00	£470.00	£500.00	£470.00																											
2011	£430.00	£460.00	£500.00	£460.00																											
Data Commentary:																															
<p>The gross median weekly earnings of residents showing an increase would show that people are able to maximise their potential and rise out of poverty. Data obtained from NOMIS.</p> <p>Suggested target should be to close the gap to the North West average.</p>																															
Performance Commentary:																															
<p>Latest information available is December 2011 as reported for 2011/12 Actual.</p>																															

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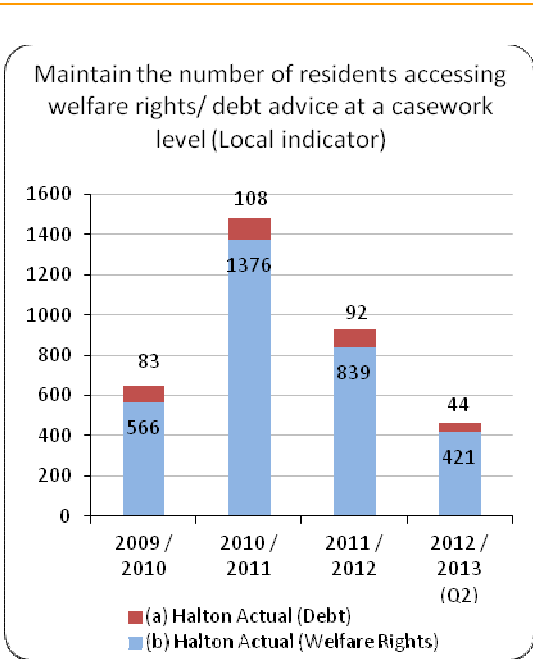
Economic Growth – Work continues to attract new employers and support the expansion of existing ones in sectors of the economy likely to see sustained growth. Examples include the recently launched Sci-Tech Enterprise Daresbury Zone and The Hive in Widnes which are attracting new employers to Halton.

Fostering Entrepreneurship - The provision of new services and signposting towards expert information and advice for new and growing SME's (Small & Medium sized Enterprises) continues, led by local partners with knowledge and experience in this specialised area of work.

Maximising incomes – Equipping our local labour force with the skills, knowledge and confidence to compete for new jobs, both in Halton and across the city region. Examples include the delivery of the Single Work Programme and the Inspiring Families project by local partners, promotion of careers in science, technology and advanced manufacturing (STAM), promoting apprenticeships and work by HEP with new and expanding employers all contributes towards maximising the proportion of new jobs filled by Halton residents.

Reducing poverty – Partners are preparing for the start of the new means-tested benefit system to be introduced from April 2013 – Universal Credit, and the significant potential impact upon the income of households in employment, especially those in rented accommodation.

SCS / ELS10 **Maintain the number of residents accessing welfare rights/ debt advice at a casework level (Local Measure)**
a) Debt
b) Welfare Rights



2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Target	2012/13 Qtr 2	2012/13 Qtr 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel
a) 92 b) 839	To maintain 2011/12 performance	a) 44 b) 421			

Data Commentary:

The number of people accessing a welfare benefits or debt advice agency and receiving a specialist casework service.

This is a numeric indicator, taken as a simple total which will reflect the level of uptake of specialist services to assist an individual to better their economic circumstances. To assist an individual to manage their income, both debt and benefits advice will be necessary and neither service in isolation is sufficient to address the needs of most individuals who need to access support. Much specialist welfare rights casework involves “in work” benefits such as Disability Living Allowance and Tax Credits and income maximisation.

Target is to maintain the performance from 2011/12 through to 2015/16. Awaiting data from CAB to provide previous outturns and the Q2 position. Chart details HBC information only.

Performance Commentary:

The demand for Welfare Rights and Debt advice services remains high and all services are at capacity. The number of advisers in large part determines how many people are assisted.

There is a fall in casework figures from 2010/ 2011 to 2011/12 due to a reduction in the number of advisers. However, it is expected that if the number of advisers is maintained then 2011/12 will be an effective baseline year to measure performance and that the number of local residents given specialist help will broadly stabilise. There will always be small variations reflecting the fact that cases vary in complexity.

However, we have seen an increase in demand for specialist advice linked into the welfare reform agenda. This is especially from those who are receiving Incapacity Benefit and need to be assessed by Jobcentre Plus against the harsher criteria for Employment Support Allowance. This increase is essentially for more complex casework advice.

The welfare reform agenda is radical and due to gather substantial momentum over the next 5 year period. It is predicted that the demand for complex casework will increase further in both welfare benefits and debt

advice and it may be the number of specialist advisers that determine to what degree this need is met. Substantive impending reform will see changes to service delivery as the team attempts to serve those most in need as reforms affect different client groups and gather pace.

Summary of Key activities taken or planned to improve performance:

This indicator measures the uptake of relevant advice services at a specialist level. It is necessary to draw a distinction between the provisions of advice via a leaflet, self-completed pro forma, or lower level tier assistance. This has a value but a distinction must be made between this and specialist work. This may involve as examples, financial negotiation for a client, court representation, a Debt Relief Order or appeal tribunal representation. It is not possible to gain a full picture of the advice sector with a single statistic and to be comprehensive would entail numerous performance indicators measures being measured and undue complexity. Commentary will be provided on key developments/ initiatives undertaken on a six monthly basis to provide further detail in monitoring reports.

It is therefore necessary to focus on a clear, easily measurable statistic, which avoids undue complications in definition. This statistic also largely avoids “double counting” which can easily happen with lower tier advice. Anecdotally, all specialist advice services have been working at capacity and the definition will illustrate reductions and increases in advice provision.

It is recognised that not all cases counted are equal in terms of content, but this does not matter because the indicator is measuring service access, and not being used as a method of inter-agency comparison. The statistics given have a value for comparative work within Halton, but external benchmarking has previously been found to be both complex and potentially very misleading.

This links to objective to maximise an individual’s potential to increase and manage their income, including access to appropriate, supportive advice services in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Also, the statistic provided will link into both the advice required to fulfil obligations under the Child Poverty Strategy.

Data provided above is from David Gray (HBC).

Supplementary Information Provided by Halton Citizen Advice Bureau – Hitesh Patel

CAB Clients Receiving a	2011/12 Actual	2012/13 Qtr 2
Casework Service for:		
Debt	854	429
Welfare Rights	976	439

Please note this supplementary information should not be used to compare agencies but for internal performance monitoring, as the measurements for what constitutes a case and formal advice, as noted above may be quite different and thus not comparable.