

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning & Skills and
Community Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 17 June 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director – Environment &
Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Employment, Learning and Skills and
Community

SUBJECT: Halton People into Jobs – Employer
Initiatives

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with an overview of the current services provided by Halton People into Jobs (HPIJ) and the incentives available to employers when recruiting unemployed and/or economically inactive Halton residents.
- 1.2 To provide opportunities to members to raise any questions with regards to HPIJ providing financial incentives/grants to employers when recruiting unemployed and/or economically inactive Halton residents that are accessing HPIJ's Ways to Work and/or Young Persons Guarantee programmes.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) **the report be noted**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background information

- 3.1.1 Halton People into Jobs has delivered a range of DWP Welfare to Work Programmes since 2011 including the Work Programme, Ways to Work, the Work and Health Programme, JETS and more recently the Work and Health Programme Pioneer Support Programme. All of these programmes have supported Halton residents with looking for and sustaining employment.
- 3.1.2 Halton People into Jobs has delivered a range of externally funded programmes that have provided financial incentives/grants to employers to recruit unemployed and economically inactive residents including Future Jobs Fund (DWP funded), Kick Start (DWP funded)

and the Intermediate Labour Market wage subsidy programme (ESF/SIF funded) through Ways to Work since 2016.

- 3.1.3 Halton People into Jobs has secured funding through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to continue to deliver the Ways to Work Programme which is funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) from April 2024 to March 2025. This includes funding available to continue to deliver a wage subsidy programme for employers that are recruiting eligible unemployed/economically inactive Halton residents aged 16+ that are accessing the programme for employment support.

The definition of economically inactive for UKSPF is:

Economically inactive individuals are those not in work and not actively seeking work (unlike unemployed individuals who are actively seeking work). Not all economically inactive individuals claim benefits. For those that do, this would include those claiming either “legacy” benefits or those within specific conditionality regimes in Universal Credit: The former includes Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Income Support (IS). The latter includes claimants within the Preparation Requirement or Work Focused Interview Requirement conditionality regimes. There is no length of time on inactivity required. People count if they are 16+.’

Ways to Work Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) wage subsidy for employers

- Employers can access funding to cover the costs of an employee’s wages for 26wks when recruiting eligible unemployed/economically inactive Halton residents that are accessing the Ways to Work programme for employment support
- ILM funding is available to SME’s, the voluntary sector and the local authority (large/national employers aren’t eligible to access the funding)
- The ILM is paid at National Minimum Wage and the employer can also recover NI/pension costs for the employee
- The individual is employed directly by the employer and receives a formal contract of employment
- The employer signs an agreement stating that if there is a vacancy available then the individual accessing the ILM will be given the opportunity to apply during or at the end of the ILM
- The employer will provide an employment reference at the end of the 26wk ILM if required
- The employer and employee can access ongoing in work support from Halton People into Jobs to address any issues that are identified and ensure support is put in place
- The financial claims process requires the employer to provide evidence that the individual is receiving the agreed payment for the duration of the 26wk ILM i.e. payslips/bank statements etc.

- The wages are claimed and reimbursed on a monthly basis by the which helps SME's maintain their cash flow into the business
 - Funding has to be spent and defrayed by 31st March 2025
- 3.1.4 Halton People into Jobs has also secured funding through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to deliver the Mayors Young Persons Guarantee Programme which is funded through the Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) from April 2024 to March 2027. This includes funding available for employers to claim a grant when recruiting eligible unemployed/economically inactive Halton residents aged 18 to 24yrs that are accessing the programme for employment support. The Young Persons Guarantee Programme has been integrated into the Halton Ways to Work programme to ensure that young people with complex barriers to work receive a wraparound package of support to enhance their chances of gaining employment and to reduce the risk of them becoming long term unemployed (NEET).

Young Persons Guarantee grant for employers

- Employers can access a £3,000 grant when recruiting eligible unemployed/economically inactive Halton residents aged 18 to 24yrs old that are accessing employment support through the Young Persons Guarantee (YPG) programme
 - YPG funding is available to SME's and the voluntary sector (large/national employers and local authorities aren't eligible to access the funding)
 - The £3,000 grant is paid in instalments of £500 per month for a maximum period of 6 months
 - The individual is employed directly by the employer and receives a formal contract of employment
 - The employer and employee can access ongoing in work support from Halton People into Jobs to address any issues that are identified and ensure support is put in place
 - The financial claims process requires the employer to provide evidence that the individual is remains in paid employment each month i.e. payslips
 - Halton has a small allocation of 6 YPG grants per year so requests for funding will be monitored closely to ensure maximum benefit to both the employer and the young people of Halton
- 3.1.5 Both of the above contracts are voluntary programmes for individuals that meet the respective criteria. Employers will be required to evidence that they meet the relevant funding criteria through an Expression of Interest process
- 3.1.6 In addition to the funding available above HPIJ can also provide the following services to employers:
- Free recruitment and job matching support to help fill their vacancies (including arranging interviews/providing feedback to candidates)

- Access to interview rooms (free of charge if they are recruiting through HPIJ services)
- Access to Jobs Fairs to promote their vacancies to local residents (larger scale recruitment opportunities)
- Redundancy support for Halton employees placed at risk of redundancy including:
 - ✓ Information, advice and guidance
 - ✓ Practical support with CV's, applications and interviews
 - ✓ Funding for retraining
 - ✓ Funding to remove barriers i.e. interview clothes, travel to interview costs etc.
- Employers can also access a range of courses for their employees via Halton Adult Learning

3.2 Performance/achievement

3.2.1 Ways to Work (April 2024 – March 2025)

- 138 starts on programme
- 69 job starts (50% into work)
- 15 people to access training

3.2.2 Young Persons Guarantee Programme – year 1 (April 2024 – March 2025)

- 19 young people aged 18-24 supported
- 6 employer grants issued

3.3 Income and expenditure

3.3.1. Ways to Work – income is generated through quarterly claims to cover the associated costs of the service plus a 15% management fee. The programme is funded through UKSPF which has an established claims process in place.

Young Persons Guarantee – income is generated through quarterly claims to cover the associated costs of the service. The programme is funded through SIF which also has an established claims process in place.

3.3.2 Income and expenditure is closely monitored through a combination of internal and external mechanisms, to ensure that contracts are delivered efficiently.

3.3.3 Where possible, access to other available services and/or funding streams are maximised to support the delivery of the Ways to Work and Young Persons Guarantee Programme contract and their challenging targets.

3.4 Key Successes

3.4.1 Ways to Work – successful close down of the SIF funded programme by 31st March 2024 and transition to new UKSPF funded programme from 1st April 2024. A large number of employers have accessed ILM funding since 2016. HPIJ will continue to build on the success of the ILM programme and will endeavour to promote good news stories to show the wider benefits of employers providing paid employment opportunities to Halton residents.

3.5 Key issues

3.5.1 Promotion of these incentives and the support available to employers needs to be ongoing to maximise the funding available within the allocated budgets (UKSPF and SIF).

3.6 Concluding comments

3.6.1 Performance across programmes for the unemployed and economically inactive has been strong. HPIJ have successfully delivered employment programmes that have provided financial incentives to employers to recruit unemployed Halton residents since 2016. We will continue to build on this success to further increase the number of local residents accessing paid employment with local employers and also within Halton Borough Council.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None identified at this stage.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

LCRCA contracts are closely monitored to ensure sufficient income is being generated to cover the full delivery costs of provision and employer incentives.

HBC internal audit conduct monthly audits on the LCRCA/UKSPF externally funded contracts.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Some HPIJ customers engage with other projects across Halton that complement each other in supporting local residents and their families with a range of issues.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

The fantastic achievements that have come out of the various Work Programmes delivered by Halton Borough Council's Employment, Learning and Skills Division getting so many people into work are a

very positive outcome for the local economy. Many of the individuals that have accessed the programme have also gained vital maths, English, IT and employability skills along the way, in addition to sector specific qualifications such as FLT, Digital Skills, Food Hygiene, CSCS etc. Signposting to partner organisations to support individuals furthest away from the labour market has been a key part of the programme. Delivery of the Ways to Work and WHP Pioneer Programme will continue to build on the success we have had previously.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

HPIJ customer's access these programmes will be signposted to various health and wellbeing initiatives that are delivered by Halton Borough Council and other external agencies including the Health Improvement Team to support individuals with a range of complex health barriers.

6.4 A Safer Halton

None

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The management of these contracts has been meticulous and close monitoring both internally and externally ensure any risks identified are carefully mitigated, with clear action plans in place to address any underperformance, quality and compliance factors.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 To maintain existing work patterns.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.