

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

DATE: 18 November 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director Environment & Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Employment, Learning and Skills and Community

SUBJECT: Halton People into Jobs – update on engaging with Economically Inactive residents and Halton People into Jobs current funding position.

WARD(S) 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 our continued focus to engage with Economically Inactive residents and individuals ‘at risk’ of redundancy for Ways to Work and the Work and Health Pioneer Programme (Economically Inactive for Pioneer).
- 1.2 To provide members with an update on current funding streams and the requirement for Halton People into Jobs to secure future funding to sustain the service it provides to Halton residents.
- 1.3 To provide opportunities to members to raise any questions with regards to us supporting Economically Inactive/Unemployed residents.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background information

Halton People into Jobs has successfully 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 unemployed Halton residents with looking for and sustaining employment. Recent funding streams continue to focus more on engaging with and supporting Economically Inactive residents into work.

- 3.2 **Ways to Work** – has been delivered by HPIJ since January 2016. It was originally funded by ESF / DWP, then the Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) up to March 2024 and then the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) since 1st April 2024. The focus for both SIF and

UKSPF was to engage with Economically inactive. Since 1st April 2024, the Ways to Work team have been engaging with Economically inactive residents and individuals that have been placed 'at risk' of redundancy across the borough.

- 3.3 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+.'
- 3.4 Since April 2024 Halton People into Jobs has supported 3 large scale employers across the borough who have been in an unfortunate position of having to put staff 'at risk' of redundancy.
- Employer A – up to 50 staff affected (July 2024)
 - Employer B – up to 210 staff affected (August/September 2024)
 - Employer C – up to 30 staff affected (October 2024)
- 3.5 Individuals 'at risk' have accessed 1:1 support, advice, and funding to help upskill and prepare for work in new roles with new employers (some staff having been employed with their previous employer for as long as 25 years have required a lot of practical and emotional support).
- 3.6 **Pioneer Programme** – in October 2023 Halton Borough Council entered a subcontracting arrangement with the existing Work and Health Prime (WHP) Contractor (Ingeus) who had been tasked with delivering the Department for Work & Pensions WHP Pioneer Support Programme until September 2024. Referrals to the programme stopped in September and customers that are currently on programme will continue to receive up to 15mths support.
- 3.7 **The definition of Economically Inactive for DWP/WHP Pioneer is:**
Inactive customers will be defined as customers who are not in UC intensive work search regime or income based JSA at point of referral. The following will therefore qualify:
- Universal Credit - Work Preparation
 - Universal Credit – Work Focused Interview Only
 - Universal Credit – No Work-Related Requirements
 - Universal Credit – Light Touch Out of Work

- Universal Credit – Conditionality Unknown
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Employment and Support Allowance Contributory (ESAC)
- Incapacity Benefit (IB)
- Income Support (IS)
- Passport Incapacity Benefit (PIB)
- Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA)
- Training Allowance (TA)
- Not in receipt of any “out of work” benefit.

- 3.8 Both of the above contracts are voluntary programmes for individuals that meet the respective Economically Inactive criteria and are looking to start work in the immediate future.
- 3.9 Ways to Work is grant funded and quarterly claims will be submitted to the LCRCA for costs associated with delivering the contract. The WHP Pioneer programme offers ‘Payment by Results’, which are received on achievement of sustained job outcomes. Performance is measured against sustained outcomes being met (meeting the earnings threshold of approx. £4000).
- 3.10 Participants can access the WHP Pioneer programme for up to 15mths. They are supported by their Advisor/Employment Specialist throughout the duration of the programme. Ways to Work is funded through UKSPF (Apr 24 – Mar 25). Discussions are being held with the LCRCA regarding the future of the Ways to Work service beyond March 2025.
- 3.11 **Performance / Achievements**
Ways to Work UKSPF (Apr 24 – Oct 24)
 212 starts on programme.
 50 job starts.
 34% into work (23% into work)
 Redundancy support – 3 employers (64 individuals ‘at risk’ of redundancy support to date).
- 3.12 **WHP Pioneer Programme (Sep 23 – Oct 24)**
 61 starts on programme.
 22 job starts (36%)
- 3.13 **Income and Expenditure**
 WHP Pioneer Programme – income is generated from job outcome payments (paid when the participant earns £1,000. Notification is received from HMRC when they achieve this) and sustained job outcome payments, whilst customers remain in sustainable employment.
- 3.14 Ways to Work – income is generated through quarterly claims to cover the associated costs of the service plus a 15% management fee.

- 3.15 Income and expenditure are closely monitored through a combination of internal and external mechanisms, to ensure that contracts are delivered efficiently.
- 3.16 Where possible, access to other available services and/or funding streams are maximised to support the delivery of the Ways to Work and WHP Pioneer Programme contract and their challenging targets.
- 3.17 **Key Successes**
WHP Pioneer Programme – currently exceeding monthly job start and outcome targets set by Ingeus/DWP
- 3.18 Ways to Work – successful transition to new UKSPF funded programme from 1st April 2024. Over 2500 Halton residents have been supported through the Ways to Work programme between since 2016. Supported 3 local employers with large scale redundancies.
- 3.19 **Key Issues**
Two similar programmes running parallel to each other potentially trying to engage with the same customer group. However, HPIJ was well placed to utilise funding streams effectively so that customers and employers get the best out of each programme.
- 3.20 The number of inactive referrals from Jobcentre Plus needed to be maintained. HPIJ marketed both contracts through community engagement and events. A review of this activity completed – most effective methods of engagement is via partnership working.
- 3.21 Future funding to continue the HPIJ service in its current format is uncertain. ELS managers are committed to securing future funding streams and are currently working with the other 5 LA's to identify and bid for new programmes available through DWP/LCRCA, however this is in the early stages at the moment. The Restart, Pioneer and Work and Health Programme have all stopped taking referrals now as per contracted arrangements. Referrals to the Ways to Work programme stop in March 2025. A gap in provision has been identified already i.e. day 1 unemployed (minimal support available locally).
- 3.22 **Concluding Comments**
Performance across programmes for the unemployed and economically inactive has been strong. We acknowledged the transition from supporting unemployed residents to economically inactive would be a real challenge, but the team worked hard to achieve the targets set out.
- 3.23 Future funding for HPIJ beyond March 2025 is uncertain. HPIJ has

delivered programmes to the unemployed and economically inactive residents of Halton for over 20 years. We will continue to bid for any programmes that will benefit the borough over the coming weeks and months.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None identified at this stage.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 DWP/LCRCA contracts are closely monitored to ensure sufficient income is being generated to cover the full delivery costs of provision.

5.2 HBC internal audit conduct annual audits on externally funded provision across the Employment, Learning and Skills Division.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

HPIJ customers will continue to 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.

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

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 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

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.

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

HPIJ look to support those individuals that require support.

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

None

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

HPIJ look to support residents and community with opportunities.

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 None identified.

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

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.