

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND LEARNING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
27 October 2010

GROW OUR OWN
Director Children, Young People and Learning

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This paper provides an update on the progress of the 'Grow Our Own' service since operational activity began in Bracknell Forest in February 2010. The service is financed from section 106 funds.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Children Young People & Learning Overview and Scrutiny Panel note the Report.

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Grow Our Own originally started in 2006, continuously developing to meet current economic needs. The service provides support and training to complement existing qualification-based programmes by focusing on local people and their potential to gain new or better quality employment, as an immediate response to newly created jobs, or for those preparing for employment in the future.
- 3.2 The service delivers the Council's medium term objective 1.5 (ensuring local people gain the skills for employment in the new town centre) and assists towards objective 12.1 (contribute to the development of an appropriately skilled workforce through Adult and Community Learning).
- 3.3 This is a unique service for non-employed people, providing opportunities for skills development in order to improve employability and facilitate career change. Due to the economic downturn and revisions to Welfare to Work programmes there are currently fewer statutory programmes available for job seekers and virtually no programmes for non-employed people not claiming benefits. The Grow Our Own service has therefore attracted growing interest from Bracknell Forest residents.
- 3.4 In 2009 Grow Our Own bid for the Future Jobs Fund contract from Department of Work and Pensions to provide funding to employ and train 168 18 – 24 year olds not in education, training or employment across Berkshire for a six month period, providing them with experience and skills to include on their CV. Bracknell Forest hosts 30 Future Jobs Fund posts with 27 young people already in employment. Grow Our Own provides the majority of training for all candidates and supports those that are not offered continuous employment in their FJF roles with job search and skills. This scheme will cease in December 2010, due to change in government policy.
- 3.5 Between February and September 194 Bracknell residents received support. Due to their individual circumstances the nature of this work requires intense support and activity. A number of clients had been in the same employment for many years and not had an interview or updated their CV for some time. Others have been made redundant, experiencing the different levels of emotions and practical barriers associated with redundancy. Some are returning to the labour market following a career break either for parenting or for health reasons including mental ill health.
- 3.6 The average cost per person for 1:1 intensive support, skills training and Advisor assistance aiming to result in progression to employment or further education is approximately £445.00

based on the current target of 350 initial interactions per year. This cost also includes the additional activity of forming partnerships to provide a wider service offer, identifying local skill requirements and shaping the skill offer within Bracknell Forest. The interaction target was increased from 200 to 350 in July due to the high demand for the service in the first 5 months

3.7 The level of activity against targets is shown in table A.

Table A	Annual target Year 1 Revised	Pro-rata target (February - September)	Actual (February - September)	Notes
Receiving Information, Advice or Guidance (IAG)	350	233	230	All clients receive IAG and are either signposted to other external provision or move on to the targets below.
Attended skills based training (minimum of 7.5 hrs per session)	80	53	63	Clients eligible to attend any number of training sessions.
Progression to employment. (Average of 4 x 1:1 sessions + 4 skills training sessions & 10 attendances at Job Club)	35	23	27	Low number in initial months as clients have to undertake a range of activities prior to gaining sustainable employment.
Progressed to further education	10	6	8	
Employer vacancies identified	40	26	30	

A number of case studies are included in Annex 1 which illustrates the breadth and range of adults accessing support through the Grow Our Own project.

- 3.8 A budget plan for any future work has been developed in partnership with RBWM, as this joint working will provide a benefit of reduced cost through sharing management arrangements. These include providing an ability to keep internal staff resources to a minimum as cross Borough working is utilised during peak periods and staff annual leave, shared website and marketing responsibilities and wider partnership working with external organisations and therefore improved opportunities for GOO clients. The current funds will support the service through to July 31st 2011
- 3.9 Working alongside the Bracknell Forest Adult and Community Learning (ACL) service, Grow Our Own project staff have been able to identify new provision to be offered that meets the requirement of the ACL service as well as enhancing the offer for learners. This in turn has brought new learners to the service thus supporting ACL Skills Funding Agency targets.
- 3.10 Partnerships have been formed with a variety of organisations, public, private and voluntary to enable greater economies of scale, client support and clear referral routes as well as to bid for additional funds to build on delivery and interventions. Work undertaken includes specific activity for target groups and interventions to widen engagement and participation. Details are included in Annex 1.

- 3.11 Grow Our Own compliments the work of Job Centre Plus (JCP) for those clients that are unemployed and claiming benefits. The focus of JCP is to register claimants for benefits, check eligibility and identify they are actively seeking work. A claimant must be unemployed for a minimum of six months prior to being referred to a mandatory Department of Work and Pensions intervention. Grow Our Own has an intermediary agreement with JCP to enable clients to access an employment support service at the beginning of their claim when they have more chance of success of a job outcome rather than six months later when self esteem, motivation and confidence could be reduced.
- 3.12 The current Welfare to Work provision is in the process of a complete revision. Grow Our Own has confirmed their interest as a provider to DWP in the future or as a partner to a main DWP provider.
- 3.13 In the event of no further funding or additional funds to continue the project the main function would be closed in Bracknell. The skills delivery programme would continue within the adult learning programme as far as financially possible and continue to be advertised as a skills for work programme strand.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Client Case Studies

Contact for further information

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Example Client Case Studies

These case studies have been selected to illustrate the range of clients who have used the Grow Our Own service

1. Following attendance on a summer course delivered by Grow Our Own to support the Education Business Partnership (EBP). 18 year old has enrolled on a full time hair and beauty course at college and is continuing to work with Grow Our Own to gain part time employment to fit in with her course and gain practical work experience.
2. 21 year old with 6 previous jobs, continuous employment but all temporary worked with the Advisor to identify a clear career direction and identify specific skills that would appeal to defined employers. He attended the Path to Work course and is currently on a work trial with an opportunity of an employment contract at the end of the trial.
3. A young person referred via the Future Jobs Fund who had been unemployed for over 12 months was awaiting a placement opportunity and CRB clearance, during this time attend a 2 day "Career Taster" in Health & Social Care and worked with a Grow adviser to pursue permanent opportunities in Health & Social Care. Secured a permanent post as a support worker to older people in a residential care home.
4. JCP referred a client to Grow Our Own to revise for the Construction Skills Corporate Safety test (CSCS). He later passed the test, a requirement to work on any construction site and secured employment with a local Contractor.
5. A young person referred via the Learning Bus gained support with his CV and advice on suitable organisations to approach speculatively as he has a degree in Sports. He has secured employment with Sports Direct.
6. A professional decorator had been made redundant from his last employer and was considering setting up his own business. He attended 'Be Your Own Boss' and Health and Safety course through Grow Our Own and confirmed he would like to continue down the path of self employment. He was referred to the local Business Link Advisor. He has now opened for business and is building a customer base.
7. Employed as a research chemist, however could not sustain full time employment due to childcare issues. Following careers advice and transferable skills analysis she has decided to change career and has recently started a course of study towards a PGCE due to commencing in September.
8. 50+ woman made redundant from a Supervisor post and referred to Grow Our Own through a friend. By this stage she was despondent and felt 'rejected' by the redundancy process from an employer of 15 years. Alternative career options had been considered but she felt she lacked the skills to undertake an alternative career path. The Client Adviser secured a place on a specific careers guidance project aimed at 50+ clients. The project provided action learning sessions with 5 other participants followed up with 1:1 focused career developments. This enabled our client to review her career, consider her transferable skills, self promotion and networking skills. She explored a number of options before deciding to undertake further training and has now secured employment in a different industry sector to that she was made redundant from.

9. 60 year old referred from Nextstep came for help with his job search, his circumstances were such that he had to have an income for a further 5 years minimum. Using resources and funds from the Digital Learning Project he was encouraged to attend 'job club' which he did on a regular basis as well as the open IT sessions at the Open Learning Centre on Fridays to search the internet for work. He subsequently secured employment with Thames Travel as a bus driver. He applied for the role via the job club facility where assistance with completing and scanning the application form was provided and then emailed to the employer. Prior to the interview he had 1:1 interview skills support. His interviewer commented on his polished interview skills.

10. 50+ couple who had run a pub in Devon and were made redundant, moved back to BFC area and had struggled to find work for 4 months after working with Grow Adviser and attending accredited Food Hygiene course (their previous qualification had expired) he secured job as a Catering Manager, she a Food & Beverage Assistant, and they are awaiting the outcome of an application to manage a pub/restaurant in the area.

Grow Our Own Activity

This is a summary of work that has taken place in Bracknell Forest from February until September 2010.

Partnerships

- Partnerships formed with the following organisations to enable greater economies of scale and impact:
 - National careers advice service (Nextstep). GOO provides a follow on service for clients they are unable to assist due to eligibility constraints. In turn Nextstep provide up to date information on work and soft skills required by clients. GOO deliver interventions or set up provision that is open to all as well as providing a referral route for Nextstep ensuring there are progression routes from advice and guidance onto skills support prior to FE or employment take up.
 - Jobcentre Plus. An intermediary agreement has been set up between both organisations to ensure JCP refer clients at the start of their period of unemployment rather than having to wait until their 6 month point before an intervention is compulsory. Client Advisor has a regular slot at JCP to inform Advisers of current provision and likewise JCP Advisers provide input on current requirements. An example of this is a recent directive that JCP Customers must provide JCP with a CV to hold on file. Writing a CV is not a service that JCP offer and so the client comes to GOO for support who then submits the CV to JCP. In turn JCP refer clients of all abilities to provision.
 - Careers Springboard (Executive job support volunteer led and facilitated organisation operating in Bracknell). Telephone calls for Careers Springboard are directed from their website and literature to GOO who then forwards the relevant information back to the lead volunteer. Several clients have engaged with GOO as a result of this and have been able to access specific careers advice and additional networking opportunities.
 - The Royal British Legion (Ghurkha Community). Planning Education for Speakers of other Language provision (ESOL), numeracy, literacy and family learning events to support the Nepali community with improving their employability.
 - Children's Centres and PACT. Providing specific interventions for women returners to work, access to a careers adviser to discuss progression opportunities and practicalities of returning to work. Plans in progress for the learning bus to set up sessions in Crowthorne and Sandhurst to deliver ICT skills related to improving access to employment.
 - Berkshire Healthcare Trust NHS – Talking Therapies, providing outreach support for service users looking to return to employment after a career break.
 - Bracknell & Wokingham College Work Based Learning/Apprenticeships team – Proposing the expansion of their programme to include more sectors e.g. Retail, Hospitality, and Catering as a progression route for learners.

Information

- Set up and implementing weekly job seeking resource sessions, regular sector based career tasters, business start up information events, accredited training programmes and a 3 week rolling programme of basic job support for clients with limited previous job seeking experience.

Funding

- Sourced additional funding to deliver a specific project identifying barriers to work and progression to education or training for adult NEETS.

Joint working

- 'Flair on the Floor' a contract with Age UK for people aged 50+ to identify the transferable skills they can offer the retail sector. Clients attend a sessional workshops and a 13 week work placement leading to secure sustainable employment.