

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY HEAD OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

TO:	THAMES VALLEY BERKSHIRE ELEVATE (CITY DEAL) JOINT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	23rd January 2015	AGENDA ITEM:	
TITLE:	ELEVATE THAMES VALLEY BERKSHIRE – PROJECT UPDATE		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on key activity / elements of the Thames Valley Berkshire Elevate programme covering the period July 14 to January 15, and is provided by the Elevate Programme Manager, based at Reading Borough Council.
- 1.2 The Thames Valley Berkshire City Deal (known as Elevate Berkshire) is focused on increasing the participation of 16-24 year olds in education, training and work, to develop work-related skills and to streamline the pathway to employment for young people. This is linked directly to a broader objective of delivering economic growth locally, and to address local concerns about the number of young people who are NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training).
- 1.3 Elevate Berkshire aims to address the skills gaps and unemployment and underemployment of the 16-24 year old population. Overall the aim is to deliver employment and skills support for 4,500 young people. The deal will deliver improvements in existing schemes to generate:
 - 1,300 new employment opportunities for young people including helping 800 sustain work for at least six months;
 - 1,500 work experience placements
 - 300 additional apprenticeships
 - 800 new Youth Contract wage incentives
- 1.4 New approaches will also be developed to help more young people into sustainable employment ensuring 900 young people do not make a repeat claim within 9 months of their last, and increasing the earnings of 450 young people.
- 1.5 More information on the 'Deal' can be found here - https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/253233/Thames_Valley_Berkshire_City_Region_City_Deal_Document_FINAL_WEB_VERSION_131025_.pdf

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Joint Committee note the progress report (covering the period July 14 to Aug 15) and highlight any areas of concern, or areas they require further information.

3. PROJECT UPDATE

3.1 Finance Update

The combined programme budget is £5.1 million. (Please note – £2.4m is a notional allocation of European Social Investment Fund (EUSIF) money to be drawn down from April 2015 – on the premise that the EUSIF Operational Programme has been signed-off. A further updater is provided below.

£2.4m youth contract funding allocated to Elevate Thames Valley Berkshire, for delivery of agreed outcomes of the deal, has been apportioned as below.

Local Authority	Year 1 Funding	Year 2 Funding	Total
Bracknell Forest	£152,500	£72,500	£225,000
Slough	£131,316	£101,317	£232,632
West Berks	£101,500	£50,500	£152,000
Windsor and Maidenhead	£161,045	£35,500	£196,545
Wokingham	£379,700	£11,400	£391,100
Reading	£208,000	£42,000	£250,000

The £2.4m youth contract money was to be used as 'match' to draw down a further £2.4m of EUSIF from April 2014 – the beginning of the project. However, due to a challenge to allocation of funding by Sheffield and Liverpool councils – the decision around EUSIF money has been delayed. It is anticipated that the agreed programme will be signed off by the end of March 2015; meaning we can begin to draw down EUSIF money from April 2015.

The delay has meant that we are unable to use any youth contract money, spent during year one, as match for EUSIF. We have estimated that £1.2m will be spent in the first year of the programme (April 14 to March 15).

In summary, the programme can still draw down £2.4m of EUSIF funding via the LEP. However, as we can't use any of the youth contract money spent in year 1 as match, we now need to find £1.2m of additional, clean match funding to draw down EUSIF money against. We are in discussion with the Cabinet Office around what can be used as match; and will provide a further update at the next Joint Committee meeting.

An additional £300k was given by the Cabinet Office City Deals team to fund the involvement of the Behavioural Insights Team in the Elevate programme.

3.2 **Overarching Communications Plan and Branding**

An overarching communications plan and branding guidelines have been developed for the Elevate Berkshire project. Each local spoke is expected to market their service and produce a local marketing plan based on the guidelines set out centrally.

From January 2015 local spokes will be implementing their communications plan to market their Elevate projects and Elevate Me websites the primary focus of this will 16-24 year olds in Berkshire.

3.3 **Data Tracking Update**

A specification for the data tracking function has been written and will be wrapped up into the call-off for the Adviza Framework Order. Data tracking will be incorporated into the current CCIS system used to record data on young people who are NEET. Adviza currently manage this system on behalf of four of the six local authorities excluding Slough and Windsor and Maidenhead. This system will be extended to cover age 16-24 year olds and Slough and RBWM will manage their own CCIS system and will continue to provide data and track young people's destinations to reduce the number of unknowns. Adviza will manage the data tracking system for Elevate and be responsible for reporting back each month with output figures and will be responsible for the collection of the evidence relating to the outputs and in preparation for when it may be required to EU SIF funding.

3.4 **Behavioural Insights team (BIT)**

The BIT has been working with local spokes on projects which have been identified in local areas. These trials undertaken have focused on apprenticeships in Slough and work to increase footfall in the Elevate Wokingham Hub.

- **Slough Apprenticeship Trial** - The BIT has been working with Elevate Slough to encourage employers to offer apprenticeships; a trial was carried out on Slough Trading Estate in September 2014, aiming to increase the number of businesses in Slough who are willing to consider offering an apprenticeship, traineeship or work experience. The results of this trial are in Appendix A.
- **Wokingham Hub Trial** - The BIT has been working with Elevate Wokingham, in order to increase the footfall in the Elevate Wokingham Hub. In practice, the BIT undertook a number of approaches / methods of engaging with young people; including text message.

3.5 **Lone Parents**

Gingerbread Marks and Start

Working with JCP and Gingerbread, Elevate will be part-funding an employability programme for Lone Parents. Gingerbread is a specialist Lone Parents charity with a wealth of experience of working with and understanding the needs of Lone Parents. Participants in the programme will be referred via JCP and will receive pre-placement support to help with confidence building and general employability skills before taking part in two weeks work experience in a local Marks and Spencer store. Throughout the

placement participants work to specific guidelines to gain all the experience they need in store, if the placement is judged to be successful the participant will be considered to take any paid vacancy for up to 6 months after their placement.

Participants will receive post placement support for a further 6 weeks after completion of the placement. Gingerbread Marks and Start programmes consistently achieve a job entry rate of 55% of participants.

To remove the barriers to taking part in the programme parents will be assisted to access the support they need; this includes childcare arrangements and travel considerations.

Lone Parents Event

In partnership with JCP and Children's Centres, Elevate will hold a Lone Parents Event in Reading. This will provide lone parents with the opportunity to access information and guidance on education and training options available to them through Reading College and New Directions. Family friendly employers will also be invited to attend to provide a channel for parents to talk to potential employers. Other services such as Children's centres and the Family Information Service will be present offering advice on childcare, benefits and support services.

Lone Parents Course

Elevate Windsor and Maidenhead- A lone parents course will be running out of the Maidenhead Hub. Housing Solutions in Maidenhead will be running a Lone Parents Course for around 16 participants in the Maidenhead Elevate hub.

The course will run for 6 days and will cover a range of topics such as Childcare costs, Travel, Budgeting, Universal Job Match, Confidence and Motivation. Participants will receive a Level 1 Certificate in Employability Skills. After completing the training parents receive assistance with relevant job search and job matching with key employers. Parents will be support with childcare costs to enable them to attend.

3.6 Disability and Supported employment

As part of the work to develop pan Berks models to support young people into employment, we will be scoping out the possibility of developing, and implementing, a pan Berks supported employment and brokerage service for young people with disabilities.

NEET data highlights a disproportionate number of young people who are NEET, have a statement of special educational need or a disability. Early scoping has identified that there is little provision across Berkshire to support young people with disabilities into paid employment

A meeting will be held in Reading in February with representation from all LA's; who will discuss the current service offer and possibility of working more collaboratively, pooling budgets and support – under the umbrella of the Elevate service.

3.8 Elevate Business

Elevate business is the employer facing side of the project and will operate via two elements. An Elevate Business page, linked to the Elevate Me website will provide information to employers regarding the benefits of taking on a young person and will be linked to the Business Growth HUB website, where businesses will be able to access a range of other support services. Employer engagement via local spokes will enable the process of matching young people, who are work ready and with the right skills, to the specific needs of employers. Local employer brokers/business engagement co-ordinators will work with local businesses to meet their needs and simply the pathway for employers.

Elevate Business Website

The Elevate Business website is currently being developed, activity relating to its development are:

- The brand 'Elevate Business' has been agreed.
- The Elevate Business page will take the format of a pan Berkshire page listing with details for a brokerage contact in each spoke. Every Elevate Me website will link back to the same Elevate Business page.
- The Elevate Business brand and logo is being developed.
- A pan Berks logo and landing page is going to be designed, along with the purchase of URL, we have received quotes and are just waiting for sign off to commission this.
- Content of the page will include videos, links to the Business Growth Hub for support to businesses, general information on young people and how businesses can benefit by taking them on/ where they can access support to do so.

Content of the website will guide businesses through the various activities businesses can do to support young people. This could be through:

- Work shadowing/work experience.
- Interview preparation and mock interviews
- Apprenticeships and traineeships
- General recruitment

Elevate Business will show businesses the benefits of employing/ supporting young people and make it easier for businesses to understand how they are able to engage with young people via Elevate.

The Elevate Business page aims to act as a business facing link within the Elevate Me websites.

This will aim to:

- Address the mismatch between what it is that businesses need from potential employees and the skills that young people can bring to their organisations.
- Highlight the benefits of schemes such as apprenticeships and traineeships.

Employer Engagement and Brokerage

Elevate will be hosting an employer event in February, for those working on employer brokerage across Elevate. This will be attended by representatives from all spokes and providers to develop the employer engagement part of Elevate.

3.9 Collaborative Working

(key partners and providers tasked with delivering the Elevate programme)

After some initial issues around resources and capacity, Job Centre Plus (JCP) are now fully engaged with Elevate and are working closely with all local spokes. JCP has committed a resource to each co-located HUB and are actively sign-posting young people to the wider Elevate service. More widely, spokes have ensured there is a mix of both strategic and operational providers within co-located HUBs / within each locality; ensuring a holistic offer for young people resulting in a more streamlined pathway.

3.10 Pilot projects for particular protected characteristics / cohorts of young people

With the number of NEETs reducing as the economy improves; we can make a calculated guess that the young people left will be what some providers and key partners refer to as "hard to reach". With this in mind, it is important that the Elevate programme develops, and implements, creative ways of supporting these young people to move from being NEET to EET.

We are therefore scoping out a number of creative and forward thinking projects focusing on lone parents, SEN young people, looked after children and young people with involvement with youth offending teams.

Trial summary: Encouraging employer interest in apprenticeships through reciprocity

As part of the Thames Valley Berkshire City Deal, the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) has been working to reduce youth unemployment and underemployment. Encouraging employers to offer apprenticeships was the focus of a trial carried out on Slough Trading Estate in September 2014. This short note describes findings from the trial and lessons that all local authorities can apply as best practise.

Aim

The aim of the trial was to increase the number of businesses in Slough who are willing to consider offering an apprenticeship, a traineeship or work experience.

Specifically, we compared two ways of contacting businesses to see how effective they were in increasing the willingness to consider offering an apprenticeship, a traineeship or work experience. The two ways were:

1. A visit and a free biscuit from a group of young people, as well as information by mail (“visit group”);

This draws on research that has shown that receiving a small gift (in our case a biscuit) creates a sense of reciprocity and makes the recipient more likely to act.¹

2. Just receiving information by mail (“mail only group”).

The BIT worked with East Berkshire College (EBC) who provided the trial materials (brochures and biscuits), and recorded whether businesses contacted their Business Services team after the intervention (by phone or email). Slough Borough Council’s Young People’s Service provided staff and recruited young people (aged 16 to 22) for the day.

The young people attended a half-day training at the Slough Aspire Centre where they learned about the trial and interacting with employers. In the afternoon, they visited businesses in groups of 3-4, handing out information and biscuits.

Results

Businesses were randomly assigned to the two groups: the “visit group” consisted of 144 businesses, and the “mail only group” of 145 businesses. The results show that in the visit group, 3 businesses (equivalent to 2%) contacted the EBC Commercial Service, while in the mail only group zero businesses did so. This suggests that a visit from a group of young people is more effective in encouraging employer interest in apprenticeships than just receiving information by mail. If a similar technique were used across all businesses in Slough who do not yet higher apprentices (93% of all business units), this would lead to around 100 additional businesses taking on apprentices. If each business took on two apprentices, this would create 200 new apprenticeships in Slough.

¹ Falk, A. (2007). Gift exchange in the field. *Econometrica*, 75(5), 1501-1511.

In addition, the trial day was a valuable experience for the young people involved. In the feedback collected at the end of the day, the young people reported having appreciated the opportunity to learn about and practise approaching new people and businesses. Many were also surprised to find out about the number of different businesses on the Slough Trading Estate.

Lessons learned

Although there was a difference between the two groups, the numbers are relatively small. This can be due to two things. First, we did not have full data on the number of businesses that already had apprentices on the trading estate. The response from several businesses was that they already had apprentices. Second, it may be that the team at the EBC Business Services was not able to pick up all calls if the advisers were on a visit or on the phone when a business tried calling.

When using this approach in the future, we therefore recommend:

Ensuring that there is good baseline data on whether businesses already have apprentices. The Skills Funding Agency has recently made this data available through Caroline Perkins at the LEP.

Ensuring sufficient response capacity, such as allocating extra time for responding to phone enquiries.

If these are ensured, we believe that using young people to contact businesses can be a cost effective way to encourage employer interest in apprenticeships, while offering young people a valuable experience for learning employability skills.

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