

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY HEAD OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

TO:	THAMES VALLEY BERKSHIRE ELEVATE (CITY DEAL) JOINT COMMITTEE		
DATE:	17th July 2015		
TITLE:	ELEVATE THAMES VALLEY BERKSHIRE – SPOKE (local authority) AND HUB (pan Berks projects) UPDATE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR MUNRO		
SERVICE:	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE	
LEAD OFFICER:	Grant Thornton	TEL:	07912 068 916
JOB TITLE:	Head of Economic and Cultural Development	E-MAIL:	Grant.thornton@reading.gov.uk

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 locally, 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/25323

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That Joint Committee Members note the report and progress made within their own Authorities

3. Local Authority (spoke) update

Elevate Berkshire is the physical place for 16-24 year olds in Berkshire to seek help, advice and support on employment, work experience, volunteering and mentoring. This is part of a Berkshire wide project supporting young people on their journey to employment.

Implementation of the local spoke projects began in April 2014; local spokes continue to make progress in implementing their project and are at various stages.

Delivery of the Elevate service is tailored to meet the needs of each local area; local spokes agreed in the City Deal to deliver their Elevate service as follows:-

3.1 Bracknell - Sustainable Employment

Complement existing provision by providing independent, co-ordinated business engagement that will support current providers to successfully 'convert' their contact with young people into long-term employment.

Elevate Bracknell Progress Update

- An interim hub in the former Adviza premises has been rebranded the Elevate Bracknell Hub and partners have been relocated
 - ➔ Due to the town centre regeneration these premises had to be vacated now and Elevate is operating from the Bracknell Open Learning Centre until the final premises are ready
- Progress has been made with securing a final hub location. A Hub co-ordinator has been recruited and has started in post.
- Elevate Partnership continues to work very well, new external partners have joined and conversations about re- and colocation of other Council services in the new Hub have started
- Work has been commissioned for a How-To guide on SEO and digital marketing for Elevate Me Bracknell Forest enabling the Hub Co-ordinator to do website improvements in future
- Elevate Bracknell Forest is working with Mace (construction contractor for the town centre regeneration and Binfield learning village) on a construction apprenticeship pathway project
- Elevate Bracknell Forest is working with Bracknell & Wokingham College and the Council's Social Care department on improvements of social care staff recruitment (expansion on sector based work academies already in place)

3.2 Reading – Building Pathways

The Reading approach has developed from an existing partnership of key agencies involved in the delivery of support to young adult, from mentoring and volunteering to supported employment projects. The Elevate Reading programme has allowed partners to come together with a cohesive approach to employment and training. While these are firmly focussed on young people who are not in education, employment or training there is now a clear focus on the barriers some groups of young people face in entering the world of employment.

Projects streams around support for those with special educational needs or emotional needs, as well as those from hard to reach parts of the community, and lone parents provides targeted and consistent support where it is needed most.

A physical base is opened on Floor 3 at Reading Central Library, in an easily accessible, and welcoming setting. The customer facing premises is now home to Adviza (who deliver information, advices and guidance for 16-18s) as well as DWP, MENCAP, New Directions, Reading Voluntary Action and Reading UK CIC. The latter leads on co-ordination and collaboration between partner organisations, managing the Elevate centre, as well as delivering a broad range of employer focussed activity.

Elevate Reading Progress update –

- Elevate partnership: a regular meeting takes place, for all agencies linked to the work of Elevate, encouraging outreach, knowledge sharing and reduction of duplication. Organisations like A4E, CBEBP, NACRO, Reading College and ACRE are members. Recent outcomes have included events and new partnership models.
- Social media campaign: A very successful campaign to raise awareness of Elevate Reading, and the Elevate Me website has been carried out in the build up to the official launch of Floor 3 @thelibrary. Twitter and Facebook outputs have resulted in achieving over 1000 hits on the Elevate Me Reading website in the month of May.
- The Official launch of the new Elevate space happened at the start of June (the centre had opened to the public immediately after Easter). Good local press coverage, supported by our dedicated social media campaign, has helped to raise awareness.
- A Health and Social Care Speed Dating was held at Reading College with students studying Health & social Care courses and employers from the sector all recruiting for current vacancies. This received really positive feedback and a second event is planned for the autumn. Importantly, the event brought together key partners (Reading Borough Council, DWP, Reading College, Reading UK CIC) to provide solutions to a serious skills gap in the area, and support employers in their recruitment and training, as well as encourage young people into all aspects of care.
- Although only open a few months the Floor 3 space has already hosted several employer events (including regulars Halfords and Reading Football Club), a mixture of training and outreach events delivered by different partners, as well as a steady programme of advice, counselling and careers sessions for young people. Work is underway on delivering a Retail event from the space to support employer's Christmas recruitment.

3.3 Slough – Aspire

Slough Aspire will work to increase opportunities for young people to engage with the business community building on existing commitment and joint working with local businesses and enable all 16-25 year olds, whether or not they are in employment, education or training to develop the right skills to meet the needs of business now and in the future.

Elevate Slough Progress Update

- Elevate Slough launched at Aspire Careers Fairs and skills workshops held at Economic Growth Conference in Slough which employers attended.
- Lone Parents Task and Finish groups held a focus group with lone parents in Slough to identify the barriers and needs of this group.
- Elevate Project Group consists of strategic leads at the council, East Berkshire College, Learning to Work, Slough Aspire, Job Centre Plus and the Princes Trust.
- Elevate Lone Parents Task and Finish group held a focus group with lone parents in Slough to identify the barriers and needs of this group. Since then confidence building courses been running successfully engaging with this cohort. More IAG provision been implemented for lone parents which also includes upskilling in basic English and Maths. Employment information sessions running at children's centres across Slough throughout the summer period by qualified advisers.
- Elevate Slough will be running a number of sector based pathways in Construction, IT (STEM), Retail, Hospitality and Care. The first one is the Elevate Construction Pathway in July which maximises on the high number of live vacancies in this sector over summer. 20 clients will receive a number of necessary accredited qualifications (CSCS & Site Safety Plus). Good relationships built with construction employers: guaranteed interview schemes with two construction employers has been built into the pathway so particularly job outcomes based.
- Outcomes based employability training session (Soft Skills and Traineeships event) with multiple providers worked well with 10 out of 18 of young people signing up to Traineeships. This programme is to be repeated quarterly with multiple providers.
- Elevate Work Experience programme at Slough Borough Council for JCP clients worked well with three high calibre placements. Model included employability training, certificates and references from managers on completion. This programme will be repeated quarterly.
- Increase in the number of young people using Elevate Me and for longer session times, reflecting that providers have been using the website as a tool for working with young people.

3.4 West Berkshire

Elevate West Berkshire continues to work with partners to provide education, employment and training opportunities for young people aged 16-24 who:

- are not in or at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET) and are available to the market;
- are seeking employment betterment;
- are seeking additional opportunities to excel.

Elevate West Berkshire Progress Update

- ElevateMe West Berkshire was launched at the West Berkshire Work and Careers Fair in March 2015.

- A Youth Mentoring programme is being developed with Sovereign Housing who will be incorporating this programme into their employee volunteering strategy.
- The first tranche of West Berkshire Council 16-18 Apprenticeship vacancies went live in June. Nine vacancies have been advertised.
- The four main providers in West Berkshire (Adviza, Education Business Partnership, Newbury College and West Berkshire Training Consortium) have come together under the Elevate umbrella as a new Operational Group to work more collaboratively and creatively to fill emerging gaps in provision.
- New providers, such as the Newbury Resource Centre, have been identified to be bought under the umbrella as part of a wider community partnership, to consolidate effort and maximise impact.
- Three additional initiatives have been launched for the summer term:
 - **Coaching and Mentoring:** All young people who progress through Elevate in to a positive destination are offered coaching and support for an extended period up to 18 months to ensure the destination is sustained and the young person continues to progress.
 - **Summer Programme:** Employability, social support and construction skills summer programmes will be offered over the summer holidays, focussed on those who are, or are at risk of becoming, NEET.
 - **Employer Support:** A new support service and vocational training offer for young people in jobs without accredited skills training.

Other planned activity for summer/autumn term include:

- Work experience for School Sixth Form students to raise career aspirations and equip them with skills to compete.
- Project to support young people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to access good supported housing and education, training or employment.
- Project to support 16-24 parents, through Children's Centres, to access employability, maths, English and parenting skills.
- Pop up employment shops in rural communities to offer face to face support, advice and guidance.
- Support for families of 16-24 using a model of community restorative practice.
- Targeting the Adult Skills Budget on 18-24 Apprenticeships, English and maths.
- Targeting Family Learning in Children's Centres for young families.
- Employment Adviser rotating around Children's Centres to engage and support those on the Turnaround Families programme, with the adviser referring on those 16-24 to Elevate providers.

3.5 Windsor and Maidenhead - 'Grow our own'

The Grow our Own service manages the Council's Apprenticeship and Work Experience schemes providing employment and training opportunities for over 100 young people as well as working with local employers to establish similar schemes. We will use the city deal to deepen and broaden employer engagement to greatly increase the range and number of opportunities for our young people.

Elevate Windsor and Maidenhead Progress Update

- Focus has been on driving young people into the Maidenhead hub, and this has seen an increase in footfall in the hub.
- Referrals have increased from School's to support YR11 at risk of NEET

- The Maidenhead hub is being used to deliver alternative services; Housing Solutions will be using the hubs to deliver training to start-up businesses
- Driving Theory sessions are being delivered and offered to all YP over 17.
- First phase to develop a lesson plan with a pilot school in Windsor which incorporates using Elevate Me as a tool in PSHE lessons is complete, with a review mid July.
- National Careers service will be based from the hub one day per week from July 15
- Targeted work with specific group such as young Asian women and Lone Parents.

3.6 Wokingham - Construction Hub Wokingham

A focus on maximising the local employment benefits of significant residential and town centre development schemes in the pipeline, securing employment for those who need it most and to improve the skills pool through work based training opportunities. There will also be a parallel emphasis on reducing the numbers of young people who are underemployed or in jobs without training.

Elevate Wokingham Progress Update

- An internal work experience programme has been developed and the Hub Centre manager has been working intensively on positions within the Council.
- Re-developed Elevate Me page went live in May.
- In April an Employability skills event was held with National Grid volunteers and CSV in the Elevate Wokingham Hub.
- A construction information day was held during May, 15 young people came and 6 signed up for CSCS site care and Health and Safety training at Reading College.
- Wokingham Borough Council has taken on 2 new apprentices.
- Elevate is now providing a vacancy service that is sent out every two weeks to partners.

4.0 Hub Projects Update - Pan Berkshire

4.1 Thames Valley Berkshire Business growth HUB

General Background:

Thames Valley Berkshire Business Growth Hub's main activities:

- A single web gateway for all Thames Valley Berkshire's businesses; providing access to an events calendar, an overview of grants and available business support services incl national business support programmes www.berkshirebusinesshub.co.uk
- A business network delivering relevant events and topical activities across Thames Valley Berkshire, to provide knowledge and information for growth businesses. Network activity in partnership with local touch points.
- A programme of coaching and support from an experienced team of business people to develop business strategies and plans for growth. The Growth Hub is partnering with national programmes including Business Growth Service (MAS &

GrowthAccelerator) UKTI, Innovate UK, EEN etc, and with the LEP's Thames Valley Funding Escalator.

- A competitive grants programme (now fully allocated) to help fund businesses that need up to £40k to develop new products, prove new technologies and get ideas to market.
- Business leadership training through the Berkshire Business Accelerator at Henley Business School.

Key Updates:

Phase one, funded by the Regional Growth Fund, has now concluded with all funding fully defrayed as at 30 June 2015. Phase two, primarily funded by the Local Growth Deal, continues to deliver the core services as outlined above excluding the grants which are now fully invested and no cash grants are available for phase two.

All key milestones and targets met as at end June 2015:

- 250 businesses engaged
- 154 businesses assisted
- 15 pre start/start ups assisted

The full grant budget of £488k has been distributed to businesses through a competitive grants process with grants approved by an independent panel.

106 business leaders trained through the Growth Hub funded Berkshire Business Accelerator and other short workshops

Please see Appendix i for full Business Growth Hub Update.

4.2 LMI and Business Intelligence Update

Background

LMI is required by the LEP, Local Authorities, City Deal Spokes and Education partners to understand and utilise LMI data in their planning. LMI and Business Intelligence will be used to:

- Support the employment brokerage functions of the City Deal in each local authority spoke and link to LMI needs.
- Support business engagement/inward investment by BEDOG.
- Inform TVB's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and monitor the ongoing impact of the SEP, including the City Deal and the Business Growth Hub.
- Allow targeted marketing of the City Deal Growth Hub to specific SME groups/sectors

An Economic Research Analyst (ERA) supports the Elevate project by providing LMI and Business Intelligence reports to inform the work of the Elevate project and ensure that it addresses the need in Thames Valley Berkshire.

Youth unemployment and NEETs in Berkshire

Headlines

- There are approximately 8,100 unemployed young people (aged 16-24 year olds) in Berkshire and roughly 9,500 young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
- Not all NEETs are classified as being unemployed (because some are not seeking / are not able to work).
- The majority of women who are NEET and are economically inactive are 'looking after family or home'
- Not all unemployed young people are classified as being NEET
- Most unemployed young people who are not NEET are full-time students who would like to work and are actively seeking employment
- Approximately 4,750 16-24 year olds in Berkshire are both NEET and unemployed
- Overall, there are approximately **10,000 young people in Berkshire who are unemployed (but are not full-time students) and/or are NEET**. Approximately 4,750 of whom are not seeking work and/or are not available for work (i.e. they are economically inactive). However, they may be able to enter the workforce in the near future with the right support / opportunities.

Please see Appendix ii & iii- Labour Market and Business Intelligence Update & Youth Unemployment and NEETs