

GROW OUR OWN
Director Children, Young People and Learning

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is a progress report for 'Grow Our Own' in Bracknell Forest. The project is jointly funded with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) to provide support and training for non-employed residents in both boroughs.

2 SUGGESTED ACTION

- 2.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of the report

3 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Introduction

- 3.1 The Grow Our Own Project was conceived in Bracknell Forest and the RBWM to address the challenges of regeneration in an area of almost full employment. The project seeks to provide support and training to complement existing qualification-based programmes by focusing on local people and their potential to gain new or better employment as an immediate response to new jobs, or with a view to becoming job ready in the future. The scale of anticipated employment opportunities resulting from regeneration far exceeded the locally available workforce and the development of the local population was seen as a preference to attracting employees commuting into the borough. At the same time Windsor and Maidenhead Council were in a similar situation albeit on a smaller scale with developments in the town centres that were creating jobs. Therefore the two authorities came together to establish the project and through the partnership gained start up funding from SEEDA. Windsor and Maidenhead developments were underway in 2006 and so the initial focus for Grow Our Own delivery, whilst waiting for the start of the Bracknell regeneration scheme, was centered there.
- 3.2 SEEDA funding ended in September 2009 and each local authority agreed to continue to fund the project, whilst still maintaining a partnership to retain the infrastructure and brand of Grow Our Own. A formal agreement was made with RBWM to share equally the project management costs which included:

- Employment costs of the Project Manager (BFC employee)
- Employment costs of the Business Development Manager (RBWM employee)
- Consultant costs of a Project Facilitator
- Minimal central costs (literature, advertising, subscriptions)

All other local employment costs of project workers and the operational delivery costs were to be funded by each local authority (LA), utilising the locally available funding to meet locally agreed service targets.

- 3.3 The project is managed in Bracknell Forest within the Directorate of Children, Young People and Learning as part of the Lifelong Learning Team. At operational level the project is managed by officers from both LAs working collaboratively with the project manager to maintain sub-regional partnerships with key agencies which enable and support discreet local services to be delivered.

The Grow Our Own Executive Steering Group evolved into an advisory 'Challenge Group' with senior representatives of each LA meeting with the operational team to review progress and advise on future development. BFC is represented by the Assistant Chief Executive and the Chief Adviser – Learning and Achievement.

The Grow Our Own Project is represented at the Bracknell Forest Economic and Skills Development Partnership (EDSP). Provisional performance targets were developed to reflect the level of activity anticipated, utilising the Local Authority funding available. These targets were originally proposed with an intended start date of July 2009 but, due to delays in appointing staff, operational activity did not begin until early in 2010.

The Grow Our Own work programme is linked to the EDSP action plan and the Council's sixth overarching priority to sustain economic prosperity and the corresponding Medium Term Objectives.

Project Activities

- 3.4 Partnerships have been formed with Careers Springboard, Children's Centres and JobCentrePlus to enable the Grow Our Own project to reach a range of Bracknell Forest residents. Delivery was kept low key whilst plans for the start of the town centre regeneration were being finalised.
- 3.5 Due to the re-phasing of the regeneration and with the focus on skills improvement and enhancement it was decided not to delay larger scale delivery any longer and Grow Our Own has moved to develop provision in Bracknell Forest from November 2009.
- 3.6 Whilst initially focusing on residents in Windsor and Maidenhead the project has now been strengthened in Bracknell Forest by the following actions to date:
 - Establishment of a local project team of a Client Adviser and support officer in Bracknell based at the Open Learning Centre
 - Grow our Own Project Manager appointed to new role in Adult Learning at BFC, January 2010
 - Grow our Own Business Development Officer took on the role as Project Manager, January 2010
 - Employer Engagement Officer interviews scheduled for March 2010.
- 3.7 Activity to engage clients and build partnerships with support organisations has included:
 - Initiating provision and outreach in three Children's Centres,
 - Information dissemination and co-working with Family Support Advisers,
 - Nextstep adult careers advice sessions,
 - Working with Job CentrePlus Advisers to provide information and signposting for eligible clients,
 - Project discussions with Extended Schools team,
 - Hosting a stand at the Bracknell & Wokingham College open day,
 - Hosting an employment programme supplied by the Redundancy Support Service,
 - Promoting the Digital Learning Champions programme to develop ICT skills for Jobseekers,
 - Providing an employability programme for returners to employment,
 - A Career taster programme of events focusing on key industry sectors,
 - Planned weekly 'drop in' sessions from March 18th at the Bracknell Open Learning Centre with plans to move to a town centre location. The service will be continuous throughout the year providing job seeking support, information, advice and guidance.
 - The GOO team working in partnership with the Housing Officers and the Housing team of the Council to ensure a referral process is in place via a web based system for the end of March 2010. This will be used to assess non employment of

residents and potential residents and provide information to support them gaining employment.

- 3.8 The new Client Adviser for Bracknell Forest started in February and so far has had seventeen client interactions that have resulted in:
- one client progressing onto Business Link training,
 - two having been invited to job interviews and are awaiting the results,
 - two registered on ICT courses to update their skills,
 - one enrolment on an Open University course for a formal teaching qualification

Ten clients are still actively working with the Client Adviser.

Prior to the project becoming operational with its own dedicated project team in Bracknell Forest a total of 100 Bracknell residents benefitted from the service via outreach from the Windsor and Maidenhead team. All 100 clients have progressed onto employment, further education or developed skills to enhance their employability. Progress against targets is given in Table A

**Table A
Project Targets and Outcomes**

	SEEDA funded period	2009/2010		2010/2011	Notes
		Target (pro rata of 2 months)	Achieved	Target	
Target	Achieved				Achievement relates to 4 weeks of activity.
Client Interaction (IAG)	100	25	17	200	
Employer Engagement (Placement or vacancies recorded)	37	3	0	40	Employer Engagement Officer due to start March 2010
Skills / Training	59	12	7	80	Training courses due to start Summer term in Bracknell
Progression into employment (open or voluntary)	15	1	1	20	
Progression into employment (13 weeks, 16 hours or more)	41	2	0	35	
Progression into further education	6	1	1	10	

- 3.9 A number of client studies are included in Appendix 1. These indicate the broad range of local residents who are accessing the service.

- 3.10 Following the success of the SEEDA pilot in tackling worklessness in an area of high employment Grow Our Own has been asked to present at a National Conference on Worklessness in May 2010. The presentation is to demonstrate effective solutions that can be adopted by other Local Authorities and organisations in areas where there is non employment rather than high unemployment.

Finance

- 3.11 Bracknell Forest Council committed £218,884 to support the project. A budget plan is in place showing continuity up to May 2011. Throughout the lifespan of the project additional funds will continue to be sourced to support and enhance delivery.
- 3.12 SEEDA funds continued to be used up until November 2009 for all project costs.
- 3.13 To date £9337 has been drawn down from S106 contributions. This has funded staff recruitment, local project staff, marketing materials and office stationary.
- 3.14 Forecasted costs are: £50500 for central management and joint project costs and £98000 for the local costs per annum.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – Client Case Studies

Contact for further information

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Case Studies All Bracknell Forest residents

Case Studies – Grow Our Own Clients

Mr A

Mr A is a graduate. After being made redundant from his job he found it difficult to plan a future direction. Supported with career guidance, a CV and application forms. He successfully gained a part time role with a major IT company and is about to move to a full time permanent role.

Ms B

A 50+ aged woman who had been made redundant from a Supervisor post. Ms B was referred to Grow Our Own by a friend. By this stage she was despondent and felt 'rejected' that she had been made redundant from an employer she felt she had been loyal to for 15 years. Ms B had considered alternative career options, but felt that she lacked the skills to undertake an alternative career path. The client Adviser secured a place on a specific career guidance project aimed at 50+ clients. The project provided action learning sessions with 5 other participants followed up with 1:1 focused career development. This enabled our client to review her career, consider her transferable skills, self promotion and networking skills. Ms B 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.

Mr C

Mr C attends E2E Include and he is classed as NEET. The Grow Our Own adviser identified that Mr C had low self-confidence. By offering Mr C one-to-one support away from his peer group at "Get into Work" - over a period of time this slowly improved his confidence. He received advice on presenting his CV, application forms and interview skills and has now secured part-time employment with a local food retailer.

Mr D

Mr D is 19 and following qualifying as a Microsoft Support Technician had been unemployed for 7 months (NEET). He has a severe speech impediment and although many companies were interested in him from his CV he was failing at the interview stage. Mr D did not lack any self-confidence and his CV was working so we identified that he was not managing the disclosure of his disability well. He also decided to change the types of work he was looking for to more back office IT roles rather than customer support roles that relied on verbal communication. Following changing his tactics Mr D gained employment with a local IT retailer.

Ms E

Ms E was working in the retail sector, but was made redundant due to the company going into administration. After receiving advice from a GOO adviser Ms E wanted to gain better quality employment in an office environment. GOO suggested a review of her current skills and provided CV and interview skills support. Ms E secured full-time employment and has recently been promoted.