

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning and Skills SSP (ELS SSP)

DATE: 7th November 2006

REPORT BY: Performance Management Sub-group

SUBJECT: NRF Recommendations

1.0 PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF REPORT

1.1 To update the SSP on the meeting of the Performance Sub-group meeting held on November 2nd and to seek approval to implement the findings and recommendations of that meeting

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the ELS SSP consider and approve the options and suggestions made by the Performance Management Sub-group and grant the sub-group delegated authority to implement and monitor those actions

3.0 DETAILS

3.1 The ELS Performance Management Group met for the first time on Thursday November 2nd 2006.

3.2 Present at the meeting were Gary Collins, Diane Sproson, John White and Lisa Driscoll with apologies from David Gray

3.3 The purpose of the meeting was to assess the progress of projects against meeting their anticipated spend and outcomes at the end of the Quarter 2 Monitoring period

3.4 A number of projects were requested to attend the Performance Group Meeting to discuss the performance of their project to date. The projects invited to attend were:

- Benefits Express
- CAB Debt Advisors
- Links to Work
- Halton ILM

- Enterprise Development
 - Halton People into Jobs
 - Halton People into Jobs Outreach Project
 - CLSP Co-ordinator
- 3.5 With the exception of CLSP (apologies due to staff illness) all of the projects invited were able to attend and made informal presentations to the group.
- 3.6 The Benefits Express Project are anticipating a 31k underspend due to recruitment difficulties, however, this has not been profiled against NRF but against other funding sources. It was suggested that some of this underspend be profiled against NRF
- 3.7 A request was made to the project that they give consideration to keeping more detailed records on the geographical location of clients and the target groups they are from in line with the LAA and priority wards and target groups identified in the SSPs strategies.
- 3.8 The project was requested to give a more detailed breakdown of activity as part of the next quarterly return.
- 3.9 The CAB Debt Advice project handed out leaflets detailing activity to date including outcomes achieved.
- 3.10 At the time of the meeting the partnership team had still not received a quarterly return from the CAB project. The return was now a month overdue. The project manager explained that this was due to an upgrading of office systems.
- 3.11 It was requested that in future the manager of the CAB Debt Advice project provide estimates to the partnership team if detailed information is not available at the time quarterly returns need submitting and follow this up with the detailed return when the information was available. Failure to do so may have implications for the project funding.
- 3.12 The completed quarter 2 return was received by the Performance Group at the close of the meeting.
- 3.13 The Links to Work project gave a detailed update on their activity. This project does not receive NRF so is not subject to the usual returns procedure. They are collecting useful ward based data on access to employment sites as part of the project, which will help the SSP in future planning.
- 3.14 It is anticipated that the Links to Work project may seek a small amount of NRF funding for 2007/08 to further develop the pilot but they hope to become self-sustaining through reinvesting project revenue.
- 3.15 The Halton ILM project has already exceeded outputs and outcomes to date, having been able to provide 31 placements instead of the anticipated 20.

- 3.16 The project has achieved 21 job outcomes to date, a 75% job outcome rate.
- 3.17 On the Quarter 2 return the project had projected a 10k overspend. This has now been managed and the project spend is back on track. The ILM anticipates being able to provide 2 more placements before March 2007 using the remaining funding. A waiting list has already been built up if further NRF funding is available next year.
- 3.18 If funding became available the project would have capacity to offer a further 8 placements before the end of the financial year.
- 3.19 It was requested that the project provide a post-coded breakdown of clients as part of the next return and that it provides information into the average number of weeks clients remain on programme.
- 3.20 The project was congratulated on the work to date and it was noted that the Quarterly Returns were of a high standard.
- 3.21 The HPIJ project explained that outcomes to date were lower than anticipated on job outcomes, Charter recipients, target groups and business starts. This was partly due to the project being in transition due to staff changes
- 3.22 It was also thought that the original estimates were ambitious given that the project has an increasing focus towards working with more challenging target groups and in target wards. These clients are 'work willing' but not 'work ready' and therefore the costs and levels of intervention are higher when dealing with these groups.
- 3.23 It was noted that the sustainability of jobs had increased.
- 3.24 Although an underspend was currently showing on the return, the project was able to account for this due to a number of factors regarding recharging, premises costs and staff recruitment which were not yet showing on the ledger. It was requested that a note be provided for the file explaining this.]
- 3.25 The Employment Outreach programme commenced during Quarter 2 and has had unavoidable delays around staff secondments and the project has not been able to purchase the former JCP Workshop Bus as originally planned.
- 3.26 Venues have now been identified in the community as part of a fortnightly plan and work has now commenced in these areas.
- 3.27 Due to the delays in the project start date the project anticipate a £35k underspend from the original £125k allocation of NRF, which is being offered back to the partnership for reallocation.
- 3.28 A more detailed funding breakdown was requested on the next quarterly return.

- 3.29 The Enterprise Development project has also had a delayed start. An Enterprise Officer has now been identified and it is hoped that they will commence work in January.
- 3.30 Three local business people have volunteered for the Enterprise Champion role
- 3.31 The project anticipates a £25k underspend from the original £60k NRF allocation. This is being offered back to the partnership for reallocation. The project manager was requested to amend the Quarter 2 return to show this and resubmit it.
- 3.32 The Community Legal Services Partnership were unable to attend the meeting but anticipate that they will have a £15k underspend due to the post holder leaving to take up a different job. It is not intended to replace this post therefore funding will not be required during 2007/08.
- 3.33 A revised SLA has now been received from the Happen 4U project as discussed at the September ELS SSP. It was agreed by the group to fund this proposal for 2006/07 but that a detailed business plan would need to be received for 2007/08 before further funding would be considered due to concerns about the sustainability of the project and issues over the fact that 2007/08 funding is projected to fund staff costs only.
- 3.34 It was noted that no Quarter 2 return had yet been received from Riverside College for the Childcare project. This was being followed up.
- 3.35 There were no other key issues with the remaining Quarter 2 returns.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 The ELS SSP has been awarded £1,103,841 of NRF Funding for 2006/07 by the Halton Strategic Partnership Board (HSPB) with which to commission activity around the key priorities contained within the Community Strategy and other supporting strategies.
- 4.2 Continued receipt of NRF funding is dependent upon satisfactory spend and performance against the anticipated spend and key outcomes of both the HSPB and the SSP
- 4.3 The SSP has commissioned work against key outcomes and targets for 2006/07 (see Appendix 1), with indicative allocations being set for 2007/08 subject to continued receipt of further NRF funding.
- 4.4 As part of the establishment of the ELS SSP it was agreed by the partnership to establish a Performance Management Sub-Group of the SSP to be chaired by the Vice-Chair of the SSP and including the Partnership Co-ordinator, a member of the HSPB development team and independent SSP members to oversee the use of the Partnership's NRF funding.

- 4.5 All projects in receipt of NRF are required to have in place a Service Level Agreement (SLA), signed by the SSP Chair, Project Manager and HSPB representative. Projects are also required to complete Quarterly Monitoring returns
- 4.6 No project is eligible to claim NRF funding until the HSPB team has received a satisfactory SLA and Quarterly Return.
- 4.7 The remit of the ELS Performance group is to assess the performance of NRF funded projects against the key outcomes contained within projects Service Level Agreements and Quarterly Monitoring Returns.
- 4.8 Each SSP has authority to reallocate funding within the SSP until December 2006, after this time permission must be sought from the HSPB.
- 4.9 Any NRF funding remaining unspent by April 2007 will not be eligible to be carried over and will need to be returned to Government.

5.0 POLICY AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Projects need to demonstrate clearly how they link into the aims and objectives of the Community Strategy for Halton and of the Strategies being developed by the SSP.
- 5.2 Information contained on NRF Quarterly Returns form a significant part of the Halton Strategic Partnerships Annual Assessment of Halton's progress against Floor Targets and the basis of any future funding allocations. Timely, detailed and accurate returns are therefore essential.
- 5.3 The Local Area Agreement for Halton is currently under negotiation. As part of the Performance Management Framework, Government Office will be looking more closely at how NRF funding is being targeted and used against the LAA targets and outcomes and how the gap is being narrowed in the target wards. The ELS SSP therefore need to ensure that NRF activity is allocated and monitored in accordance with the LAA framework.
- 5.4 Issues have been identified of potential overlap and duplication of activity, particularly around the projects providing debt advice. This activity has implications in terms of value for money and contribution towards targets and would merit further investigation

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 It is recognised that there is an element of risk in commissioning projects with staffing implications as NRF funding is only officially confirmed on a year-to-year basis therefore making recruitment of suitable staff potentially difficult. However, it is known that an NRF allocation will be made available to the ELS partnership during 2007/08. The allocation is likely to be reduced by 11%

on this year's total. Subject to satisfactory performance of the projects and of the SSP in overseeing funding it is likely that the SSP will receive official notification of their allocation during November 2006 and should therefore be in a position to notify projects early enough for them to be able to manage any risk.

- 6.2 If money is not reallocated by the SSP by December 2006 it will be necessary to apply to the HSPB for permission to do so. However, there is also a danger of reallocating money to projects that may be unable to spend it meaningfully on achieving the aims and objectives of the SSP. The SSP will therefore need to manage this risk by deciding to reallocate funding only when there is a realistic chance of a project having capacity to manage it

7.0 OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 It is currently anticipated that the following projects will have underspent the following amounts of NRF by March 2007

Project Name	Underspend Amount
Happen 4U	£1112
Halton Family Groups	£296
Bill Payment Service	£158
Uncommitted NRF	£6,178
Benefits Express	£10,000
Community Legal Service Partnership	£15,000
Enterprise Development	£25,000
HPIJ Employment Outreach	£35,000
TOTAL	£92, 544

- 7.2 After review it appears that 2 currently funded projects are in a position to deliver increased outcomes before the end of the financial year. These are Workforce Development and the Halton ILM. It is therefore suggested that an additional allocation be made to both of these projects.
- 7.3 That if the SSP recommend any additional projects for funding that these meet both the aims of the SSP and are time limited projects able to be delivered by March 2007.
- 7.4 That a review of projects providing debt advice be undertaken during January 2007 to ensure value for money around outcomes and joined up activity.
- 7.5 That Happen 4U be requested to submit a detailed business plan to the SSP by March 2007 before any further allocations for funding for 2007/08 are made to the project
- 7.6 That the SSP give delegated authority to the Performance Sub-group to implement and manage any agreed actions relating to NRF funding.

