

WNF Worklessness Bulletin

March 2010



Welcome to the first Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) Worklessness Bulletin. The WNF team look forward to providing you with updates on the activities and successes of the programme in helping Birmingham residents into work.

Through the WNF Worklessness programme, a comprehensive package of support has been put in place that will make a real difference to the lives of people from priority neighbourhoods seeking work. Over **100 projects** have been approved so far and are now delivering services to address the barriers that people face when trying to move into sustainable employment.

Around **2,800 people** have already been engaged and are currently receiving support based on their individual needs. The aim is to find a well-matched path for each person into sustainable employment. There are some challenging targets to achieve over the next year as our aim is to support around **4,000 people into sustainable long term employment**. The key to achieving this will be the strong networks that have been developed with all partners working on the WNF programme.

Sprint into Work!

Jericho Foundation has been working with Olympic athlete Daniel Caines to help those at most disadvantage to overcome social problems and to get into employment. 'Jericho Breakers' is an action research project funded through the Innovation Fund (a fund giving organisations the opportunity to try a new approach). The project tests approaches to employment support through motivational techniques. Daniel recently met with clients to deliver motivation sessions, to talk about the strategies he uses to overcome personal challenges, and how people can use these strategies to overcome the challenges they face in getting into work.



Daniel Caines with clients engaged on the Jericho project funded through the Innovations Fund

Local Focus

To get to the heart of the unemployment situation in Birmingham, the team had to take a locally targeted approach. The WNF programme is targeting **187 priority neighbourhoods** that have the highest levels of unemployment in the city, and local plans were developed that highlighted the estates and neighbourhoods most in need. This approach is helping the programme to reach people where they live, and provide one-to-one assistance in gaining the right skills and experience that will help them to get a job and stay in work.

'Neighbourhood and Constituency Employment and Skills Plans' identified the range of support that would be needed in each area – helping to deliver a tailored approach to providing support.

Each Constituency (excluding Sutton Coldfield), now has a programme of activities delivered by a range of providers to offer one-to-one support to residents to find work.

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Try Something New!

The **Innovation Fund** has given organisations the opportunity to try new and innovative ways of helping people move towards gaining employment. Over 120 applications were received, from which 44 grants have been approved which will deliver new and interesting ways of engaging and supporting people into employment.

The Fund will evaluate the different approaches delivered across the city to highlight good practice and inform the way that future employment Services are delivered.

All of the funding has now been allocated for this project, totalling nearly £1.7 million.

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What's New?

Graduate Advantage is delivering the '100 Grads' project to help unemployed graduates in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance obtain paid placements or unpaid internships in a range of sectors.

To qualify you must be educated as a minimum to one of the following levels; Bachelors Degree, Masters Degree, HND or NVQ Level 4.

For further information call 0121 204 4832 or 0121 204 5025 and ask for Julie or Suzie.

Alternatively email your CV to Julie at j.stonall@graduateadvantage.co.uk or post to:

100 Grads, c/o Graduate Advantage,
Aston University, Aston Triangle,
Birmingham B4 7ET.

www.100grads.co.uk



Housing Payment Scheme

The **Targeted Housing Payment Scheme**, delivered by Birmingham City Centre's Housing Department, provides assistance towards rent and council tax payments for up to 12 weeks once someone has moved into employment. This helps with the often difficult transition from benefits into employment. To date 850 people have been supported by the project.

One Kingstanding resident, a single parent with 2 children, found out about the scheme from the Job Centre when she started a new job. She was able to benefit from financial assistance towards her housing payments for the first 8 weeks after she started employment. She felt this really helped her to cope with the changes to her finances and made a real difference helping her stay in her new job.

The support is available to workless residents in the priority areas who start work and continue to be entitled to Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit.

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Jackie Lewis (centre) and the team delivery the project

Changing People's Lives

Turning Point works closely with West Midlands Police, Prison Service and Probation Service to support people with a history of prolific offending to move into sustainable employment. Most of the clients who are referred onto the programme straight from prison, are now looking to find employment and move away from their criminal past. Since the project started in 2009, 54 people have been engaged and 21 are working intensively on a programme of activity to support them to become work ready and link into employers to gain work experience.

Fred, a previous prolific offender and substance abuser felt the support he received has made a real difference to his future. He said "the project got me thinking on the right tracks. When I came out of prison before, I've had no support, but I wouldn't be where I am now without this. I've been on courses in sports coaching and now want to become a personal trainer".

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Please email your suggested stories for this Bulletin to baljeet.uppal@birmingham.gov.uk