

Employment Strategy for Children & Young People Service – Childrens Centres

1. Introduction

Living in a household where nobody is working is a significant indicator of poor outcomes for children. Research shows that they are less likely to achieve their potential. Employment helps lift families from poverty. It also has a positive effect on children's mental health, behaviour, social integration and educational performance.

Children's Centres are well placed to contribute to the employability agenda and achieving the Every Child Matters outcome of achieving economic well-being by helping to reach key government agendas such as

- a) increasing the take up of formal childcare by lower income families by 50%
- b) helping 70% of lone parents back to work and halving child poverty by 2010
- c) improving the literacy, numeracy and language skills of 1.5 million adults by 2007 and a further 750,000 by 2010

The percentage of children living in workless households is also likely to be an indicator in the new performance management framework for children's outcomes.

2. Children's Centres – the core offer

There are a wide range of employment related services that children's centres will be able to provide to parents. These will include opportunities to promote parents interest in improving work related skills – essential skills such as literacy, language, numeracy and IT which are vital to securing sustainable, well paid employment.

Once parents have found work, they may continue to struggle to manage their finances, their children may continue to live in poverty – children's centres should consider providing financial education to parents as part of their support services.

3. Partnership work with other agencies

The success of children's centres employability provision will depend on the quality of their collaboration with local agencies and partners, such as Jobcentre Plus, Welfare to Work Employment Zone providers, local education & training providers, Learning & Skills Council and the local Authority's Adult Education Service.

All children's centres should have effective links with Jobcentre Plus to encourage and support parents & carers wishing to consider training or employment. Haringey is currently piloting a JC+ programme specifically focused towards supporting lone parents into employment or training

Broadwater Farm Children's Centre is the first to pilot a "Job Point" in partnership with Jobcentre Plus. This service was officially launched on November 1st 2006 as yet it is not being monitored it is therefore impossible to prove the success or otherwise. Other Boroughs have placed the "Job Points" and "Warm Phones" within CIS offices rather than children's centres – this is to be researched.

In Haringey we are fortunate to have extra support through the Welfare to Work Employment Zone providers such as Reed in Partnership, Working Links and Work Directions. These agencies are specifically commissioned to work with hard to help groups such as Lone Parents. BME and those on incapacity benefits

Discovery is a programme funded by Job centre specifically to engage and support Lone Parents living in Haringey who are not accessing (or have not accessed for the last 26 weeks) any of the mainstream programmes i.e. JCP and the Employment Zone provision. The programme provides workshops, support and advice with the objective of helping parents eventually find employment. Childrens centres are a source of outreach for this programme and can be used for the delivery.

In work benefit advice surgeries, "better off calculations" and specialist advice on work for people looking for employment are all areas that should be provided within the children's centres. Job fairs, recruitment events, local employment initiatives can all be promoted and held in the centres.

4. Local projects

Each children's centre is unique in its delivery status. Those centres that have been integrated in with a Sure Start programme may already have an employment strategy in place. Whilst some are starting from scratch and need extensive support. Centres such as Park Lane are already working with local residents and are working in partnership with Neighbourhood Management & JUNP.

However, centres such as Stroud Green and Noel Park are at the starting blocks and need to implement programmes depending on the requirements of the community.

A survey / questionnaire has been distributed throughout Noel Park asking the residents to identify what support they require before they can start looking for training or employment. The results of this piece of work will be released in December 2006 at which time Neighbourhood Management & Noel Park Children's Centre will source provision to match the requirements.

Local Job Clubs have been set up at Noel Park Childrens Centre, Woodlands Childrens Centre & Stroud Green Childrens Centre. These are informal drop in's allowing parents to talk confidentially to professionals about benefits, training opportunities, employment routes etc.

Putting Parents First is a local programme written by Work Directions, the focus is to engage with unemployed parents, confidence building, self esteem and motivation. Preparing the parents to start their career or training options. This has been run in two centres to date Broadwater Farm & Woodlands

5. Links with Employers

There are mutual benefits in developing links with local employers. Children's centres can help employers fill vacancies by hosting or arranging courses which develop job related skills, arranging interviews and hosting recruitment fairs.

A Recruitment Fair was recently run at West Green Learning centre, the employer was London Borough of Haringey Children Services it attracted 176 people attended

6. Neighbourhood Management

The Council Neighbourhood Management team provides a local focus on renewal initiatives in the priority neighbourhoods identified in the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy - Wood Green Town Centre, Central Tottenham & Seven Sisters, Northumberland Park, White Hart Lane, Bruce Grove / Tottenham Hale.

Locally we are able to work in partnership, linking centres with the economic regeneration projects and programmes. Noel Park and Park Lane are prime examples of how we are working successfully together. A recent coffee morning held in partnership with Neighbourhood management, JC+ and Park Lane Childrens Centre attracted over 100 Lone Parents.

7. Haringey Employment Partnership

The Haringey Employment Partnership (HEP) is part of the Haringey Strategic Partnership. It ensures that the growing population within Haringey has the skills and training necessary to secure employment in the wider London economy combined with the transport infrastructure to access those jobs. Members of the HEP include – Haringey Council, JC+, Urban Futures, Haringey Teaching PCT, London Development Agency, Learning & Skills Council

HEP also actively promote Haringey as a borough with a lot to offer employers, residents and visitors

8. Regeneration

Urban Futures is the regeneration agency used for North London. It is not part of the Council but is used by Haringey Council, other local authorities and the London Development Agency to manage the delivery of specific regeneration programmes. Their remit includes promoting economic and social regeneration to help people within the most deprived areas of the Upper Lea Valley Region

The “Employ ULV” project aims to provide a flexible, innovative, co-ordinated approach to the labour market intervention in the Upper Lea Valley (ULV) which encompasses the boroughs of Enfield, Haringey and Waltham Forest.

Broadwater Farm Childrens Centre recently hosted a Stansted Airport recruitment day in partnership with Urban Futures. The event offered opportunities to work at the airport complete with benefits package and full training. We attracted over 70 local residents.

Urban Futures is responsible for bringing together key players to deliver the service, acting as the interface between training organisations, government agencies and departments, employers and unemployed residents.

9. Overcoming barriers to work

Workless people face a number of barriers to work. These can cause problems even where job opportunities are there and the individuals themselves would have a good chance of getting a job. They include:

- Responsibilities for caring for children or other family members.
- The cost of transport or difficulty in getting to where a job might be available.
- The cost of travelling to interviews or of the right sort of clothing for interviews.
- Paying for equipment or clothing needed for particular types of work.
- The cost of training or education courses.

Ideas on how children’s centres can offer help to parents overcome some of these barriers include:

- Job clubs for parents to meet other people in the same situation whilst gaining advice from professionals
- Introducing parents to providers who can provide funding for travelling to work, suitable interview clothes, training in CV writing and interview techniques
- Provide advice on suitable, affordable childcare in the Borough
- Offer benefit advice, showing examples of how parents would be financially better off in work than living on benefits

10. Children's Information Service

Whilst we can work with the parents encouraging them to seek employment, we need to be able to support any childcare barriers and concerns they may have

The CIS provide:

- A database for parents accessing childcare & related issues.
- Recruitment of new childminders through regular info' sessions
- Registration applications, national standard guidance, training info.
- Start up grant for new childminders
- Offer good quality, on going administrative advice for new and established childminders to enable their continued registration
- Links to other support organisations

The CIS database allows the public to access info' on childminding vacancies. There is no differentiation between those childminders with inadequate inspection outcomes and those judged satisfactory.

11. To summarise

The Children's Centres are an effective source for providing information and support for workless families and lone parents. Through good working relationships with Jobcentre Plus, Welfare To Work agencies and local programmes the centres can offer a range of excellent services matching the core offer required.

Schools and Community Centres are also a source of engagement and outreach, even if these are not a satellite to a children centre they should still be included in the offer to ensure we are engaging with attracting maximum groups of parents.

Although the main "hard to help" group we meet are Lone Parents, There are numerous other groups of people living in Haringey. Local knowledge of programmes is essential to ensure we are able to support all unemployed parents off of benefits into employment,

The next government "target group" are those on incapacity benefit, there will be new initiatives and programmes launched within the borough to inform people about this.

The Working Families Information Officer is a key point of information and linking with local partners. The service offers advice on implementing Job Clubs / Surgeries, information sessions, benefits, local programmes etc. As time progresses and the Phase 11 Childrens Centres are launched, the role will increase and may require further resources to ensure we cover the borough effectively.

Provision	Responsibility	Who is accountable for the link	Risk Areas
Childrens Centre	Each centre is responsible for achieving the CC core offer.	The centres can access support through WFIO	Once all centres are open, we may need more than 1 WFIO
Welfare to Work	Reed in Partnership Working Links Work Directions	WFIO will co-ordinate employment support with cc's	The 3 providers work in competition
Benefits / In work support	JC+	WFIO will co-ordinate links with JC+	JC+ are often unable to attend events due to staff shortages
Training Providers	Each cc should determine what training provision is required	Cc's are responsible for sourcing relevant training information for parents	The centres may not be aware of what is available in Haringey
Childrens Information Service	CIS are responsible for holding current data on childcare available	CIS	The data may not be up to date and places are not filled
Neighbourhood Management	WFIO responsible for initial links	WFIO will co-ordinate links with Neighbourhood Management	The employment funding will come to an end and may not be extended
Haringey Employment Partnership HEP	WFIO to link with HEP and attend relevant meetings		
Urban Futures	WFIO to link with Urban Futures & relevant programmes	WFIO	
Learning Skills Council	Training & Workforce dev Team to continue working with LSC	Training & workforce Development Team	Funding issues

