



Report to:

Northwards Housing Board

11th November 2008

Item No:

11a

Title:	Worklessness Strategy for Northwards Housing		
Date:	27 th October 2008		
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Confidential:	NO		
For: (Please tick action required)	NOTING ✓	DISCUSSION	APPROVAL
PURPOSE OF REPORT			
The purpose of this report is to advise the Board of the work being undertaken to tackle worklessness locally & at a citywide level & to recommend that Northwards develops its own Worklessness Strategy.			
RECOMMENDATION			
That the Board notes action at citywide & district level to tackle worklessness & agrees that Northwards develops its own Worklessness Strategy.			
IMPLICATIONS			
Equality & Diversity:	Worklessness disproportionately affects disadvantaged groups, BME and disabled people.		
Financial:	There will be a financial cost to developing actions to tackle worklessness, but this has yet to be determined.		
Staffing:	To be determined		
Decency Target:	None		
Governance:	None		
Risk Assessment:	To be assessed as part of Worklessness Strategy		

Equality & Diversity Implications (Please tick where relevant):

BME	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	Single Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	Domestic Violence	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	Alcohol/Drug Mis-users	<input type="checkbox"/>

Consultation/Consideration:

	Yes, No or N/A:	Name:	Date:
Sub-Committee:	No		
Area Panel:	No		
Task Groups:	YES		
Ward Councillors:	No		

1. Background

- 1.1 The City Council established the Strategic Housing Partnership (SHP) for the city with a wide range of housing partners in June 2007 to identify key housing concerns & opportunities in support of the Community Strategy. Members requiring more information about SHP can visit the website: www.mshp.org.uk
- 1.2 The Chief Executive was a member of the SHP Executive that helped to create the partnership. The review of SHP after 12 months of operation has resulted in a change in the partnership structure in order to engage more partners. The Chief Executive is a member of the Social Housing Providers Forum.
- 1.3 Within the SHP structure there are 4 active Workstreams (Affordable Housing, Managing Neighbourhoods, Respect & Community Cohesion & Worklessness) & 2 inactive groups. The Chief Executive chairs the Worklessness Workstream. The Director of Neighbourhood Services & the Head of Housing: Fourways are involved in the Managing Neighbourhoods & Respect & Community Cohesion Workstreams respectively.

2. SHP Worklessness Workstream

- 2.1 The Worklessness Workstream is charged with responsibility for analysing levels of worklessness across the city & examining causes & potential solutions. The Workstream is drawing upon a large & increasing body of national research, together with the analysis of worklessness in Greater Manchester which underpins the City Strategy.

- 2.2 The key issues being addressed by the group through its Work Plan are:

* Gathering timely, local **intelligence** on worklessness & strategic action needed to tackle it.

* Using organisational health indicators to ensure that **workforce diversity** of housing organisations reflects the communities they serve in the city & to target groups or individuals excluded from the labour market.

* Using the collective purchasing power of social landlords to influence the **supply chain** in providing greater opportunities for employment & training, particularly for the most excluded groups or individuals.

* **Collectively procuring construction & related contracts** in order to deliver wider community & social benefits beyond the actual construction period.

* Reviewing & **sharing best practice** within & beyond the city.

* **"Growing our own"**. That is, encouraging housing organisations to offer greater opportunities to their existing workforce through retention, learning & development.

- 2.3 A key role for the group is to promote Financial Inclusion of all residents & to encourage working households to remain in the city. This is very much in support of the objective of the Community Strategy to build neighbours of choice.
- 2.4 The Worklessness agenda is therefore complementary to & supportive of the work being undertaken in the city on Financial Inclusion. Members will recall that Northwards' Financial Inclusion Strategy 2008/9 was approved by the Board in July. We participate in a citywide Financial Inclusion Group to share ideas & best practice between social landlords. The Finance Manager leads on Financial Inclusion within Northwards.

3. Northwards' Contribution to Tackling Worklessness

- 3.1 Northwards is a key contributor to the Strategic Regeneration Frameworks in all of North Manchester & in the Newton Heath area of East Manchester. The Strategic Regeneration Frameworks have at their core activity to stimulate the physical & economic regeneration of their districts, thereby redressing social & economic inequalities & tackling severe deprivation.
- 3.2 Northwards Housing has developed a Community Regeneration Strategy which sets out their contribution to the regeneration of North Manchester. The role of social housing providers has changed; once seen as the providers and managers of low cost rented housing, they now have a wider role in line with the governments sustainable communities agenda.
- 3.3 North and East Manchester have an array of complex social and economic challenges due in part to the legacy of high unemployment caused by the departure of manufacturing industries from the area in the 1970's and 1980's. These high levels of unemployment have often led to other social issues which in turn, have led to areas of North and East Manchester being classified as some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England.
- 3.4 Tackling unemployment across estates managed is therefore a key objective of the Community Regeneration Strategy. A key element in creating successful, sustainable communities is improving the social and economic prospects of tenants which will in turn improve quality of life.
- 3.5 Although Northwards Housing doesn't have the resources to directly influence some aspects of the regeneration; the organisation is well placed to help facilitate a range of activities with partner organisations aimed at reducing the wider social and economic equalities that exist between these areas and the rest of the city.
- 3.6 Partnerships have been developed with three key partners to date with the aim of engaging tenants, reducing barriers that exist and facilitating opportunities for them to enter into training or employment. This report summarises successes to date and steps taken to continue to improve outcomes. (See Appendix)

4. Northwards' Worklessness Strategy

- 4.1 It is recommended that Northwards develops its own Worklessness Strategy to build upon the work of & learning from the SHP Worklessness Workstream & to further develop current partnerships in North Manchester. This strategy will be given effect through a work plan.

4.2 It is proposed that the structure & content of Northwards' Worklessness Work Plan reflects to SHP Workstream's plan, but is adapted to local circumstances in North Manchester.

5. Recommendation

5.1 That the Board notes action at citywide & district level to tackle worklessness & agrees that Northwards develops its own Worklessness Strategy.

Appendix: Current Partnership to Tackle Worklessness

1. Job Centre Plus (JCP)

- 1.1 A mapping exercise was undertaken with colleagues from North Manchester Regeneration Team which identified a correlation between high concentrations of benefit claimants and estates managed by Northwards Housing. As such, Northwards Housing sought to engage a number of agencies with the aim of developing a localised outreach service to deliver advice and guidance to tenants in areas where access to services was more difficult.
- 1.2 Job Centre Plus (JCP) agreed to second an adviser to work out of two of the three Northwards Housing Local Services Offices where access to their offices was more difficult. The intended output of the project with JCP was to help reduce the number of benefit claimants across North Manchester by supporting as many as possible towards finding training or employment. The JCP adviser aimed to stimulate resident engagement by:
- 1.3 The project ran between April 2007 and March 2008 but only had limited success; 102 tenants/residents were engaged by the JCP adviser; 98 of which were claiming Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support or Incapacity Benefits; 3 of which were NEET. 58 tenants/residents engaged were referred or signposted to alternative agencies; however, there was no monitoring of progress from this referral.
- 1.4 As the project only had limited success, JCP decided to withdraw the adviser. An Evaluation Report and an Impact Assessment of the project have been undertaken so that lessons could be learned for future projects; copies of both reports are attached at Appendices 1 & 2.

2. Stepping Stones into Work

- 2.1 Following the limited success of the JCP project, Stepping Stones subsequently agreed to become involved in a similar project and in June/July, they seconded an adviser to work in all three Northwards Housing Local Services Offices.
- 2.2 A joint action plan has been developed by Northwards Housing & Stepping Stones (attached at Appendix 3), the aim of which is to sustain the impact of the project; regular joint liaison meetings are held to keep the action plan up to date and develop new initiatives to increase referrals.
- 2.3 One of the outcomes of these regular meetings has been to link with other community based venues across North Manchester where

resident engagement could be maximised; venues identified include the Harpurhey Neighbourhood Project, TLM Centre (Monsall), Plant Hill Adult Education Centre and various SureStart Centres across the area.

- 2.4 Having adopted lessons learned from the JCP project, engagement has been good and in the three/four months the project has been running Stepping Stones have engaged around 20 people (50% who on Incapacity Benefits, Job Seekers Allowance (up to 6 months) or Lone Parents), two of whom are now on training courses and one has secured full-time employment.

3. New East Manchester

- 3.1 Northwards and New East Manchester are key stakeholders in the Newton Heath area of East Manchester. Recently, the two agencies have agreed to develop a joint working agreement (with Action Plan) in order to extend employment and economic services delivered by New East Manchester into estates managed by Northwards Housing in Newton Heath. Initiatives include Job Brokerage, Skills for Life, Construction Skills Academy and the Jobs Bus (delivered in partnership with Work Solutions) which will be parked key areas (e.g. District Centre) where engagement with tenants is likely to be high; the facility will provide advice on training and employment and will have ICT facilities to complete CVs and job searches online.

4. Other Partner Activity

4.1 Connexions

Connexions offer information, advice and support for young people between 13 & 19 on careers, education, training, etc. Following discussions about partnering opportunities, they have expressed an interest in developing a half-day drop in session from the Cheetham Hill Local Services Office. To ensure the partnership is successful, we will be looking to learn from existing partnerships to ensure key lessons learned are replicated. Northwards will be looking to discuss the possibility of the Youth Workers making referrals to the service and (based on information contained within the 2007/08 State of the Wards report) we will be looking at other outreach venues in areas where targeting this age group is a priority. A joint action plan will be developed with Connexions to ensure the impact of the project is sustained.

4.2 IMPACT Manchester

Northwards is currently developing an 'Employment & Training Charter' that will be signed by the IMPACT Manchester contractor partners who undertake improvement works in the Northwards area. The objectives of the charter include a commitment to maximise training and employment opportunities available to tenants through the work that

they (and their supply chains) undertake in the area. Northwards has recently supported Manchester Working Ltd in their apprentice recruitment (such as local advertising and support at assessment centres) which resulted in eight of the twelve apprentices on the 2008/09 intake coming from the Northwards area.

4.3 North Manchester Employment Group

Northwards is a member of the above group which brings together key stakeholders and partners from across the district involved in supporting local residents back into learning and employment. Membership includes Northwards Housing, Job Centre Plus, The Manchester College, Manchester Adult Education Service, Stepping Stones, Connexions, Work Solutions and Working Links. The group were involved in developing a North Manchester Employment Plan, a rolling programme of activities that support local residents into learning and employment which is overseen by the group. The group is used as an information sharing forum and to highlight issues which in turn are taken forward by working groups (e.g. engaging people with health problems and engaging families). The partnership working has resulted in a rolling programme of jobs fairs and information events attended by hundreds of local people and local recruitment initiatives that have opened up employment opportunities for local people.

4.4 Social Landlords & Employment Working Group

This group includes partners from the City Council and key social housing providers from North Manchester to Wythenshawe. The challenges faced in all areas are often similar across the City, therefore the groups meets to discuss interventions and disseminate good practice.

4.5 Strategic Housing Partnership (SHP)

The SHP has a worklessness workstream of which Northwards is a key partner. The workstream has developed an Action Plan which sets out the key priorities including developing role of social landlords as employers, frontline worker training and gathering local intelligence to understand causes of worklessness and key areas for intervention at both the local and SHP level.

Pre Project Initiation: Planning

1. Project title	Northwards Housing Employment Pilot		
2. Description of project	<p>The Northwards Housing Employment Pilot was an outreach service developed in partnership between Northwards Housing, Job Centre Plus (JCP) and Manchester City Council.</p> <p>The JCP seconded an adviser to work out of two of Northwards Housings' Local Services Offices (where access to their services was more difficult) to engage residents when they came in to access housing services.</p>		
3. Describe the baseline of the situation before the project was implemented.	<p>A mapping exercise identified a correlation between high concentrations of benefit claimants and estates managed by Northwards Housing.</p> <p>Please refer to 2004 & 2007 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data for baseline information.</p>		
4. Reason for initiating project	<p>The City Council (through the Strategic Regeneration Framework for North Manchester) has a priority to tackle worklessness in the area. A mapping exercise identified a correlation between high concentrations of benefit claimants and estates managed by Northwards. As such, Northwards (along with MCC & JCP) were keen to develop a more local outreach service to encourage residents to access advice and information regarding training and employment opportunities.</p>		
5. Measurable outputs intended at project planning phase	<p>The intended output of the project are to help reduce the number of benefit claimants across North Manchester by supporting as many as possible towards finding training or employment. The JCP adviser aimed to stimulate resident engagement by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting residents coming in to local services offices to access housing services • Promoting service and encouraging Northwards Housing officers to refer residents to him • Attending resident and local community group meetings • Attending other local multi-agency events where residents would be likely to attend 		
6. Projected timescale for when outputs will be realised	April 2007 – March 2008	7. Projected Budget	None specifically allocated
8. Detail the link between the outputs and the desired outcome.	<p>The desired outcome of the project was to actively engage residents (particularly those claiming benefits) to help them access training and employment advice.</p> <p>It was intended at planning phase that the outputs listed in Section 5 above would achieve this outcome by providing the JCP adviser with adequate opportunities to engage with residents and promote the services available within the Northwards Housing Local Services Offices.</p>		

Post Project Initiation: Review

1. Project Title	Northwards Housing Employment Pilot		
2. What methods of performance measurement are being utilised?	The JCP Adviser kept a log of all residents engaged along with referrals made.	3. What PIs does the project relate to?	None specifically
4. What is the outcome of any customer involvement (if applicable)?	Project reliant on actively engaging customers however success was limited (see Section 6 below).		
5. Describe the baseline of the situation since project initiation.	Difficult to predict changes. This pilot project (along with work of other agencies locally) aims to help improve baseline situation when 2010 IMD data published.		
6. Have the outputs been achieved?	<p>Partially. 102 residents engaged by JCP adviser; 98 of which were claiming Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support or Incapacity Benefits; 3 of which were NEET.</p> <p>58 residents engaged were referred or signposted to alternative agencies; however, there was no monitoring of progress from this referral.</p>	7. If no, what is being done to address this?	N/A
8. Have the outcomes been achieved? If not, state why.	<p>As the outcome was to develop a more local outreach service to encourage residents to access advice and information regarding training and employment opportunities; the fact that 102 residents were engaged (over 50% of which were referred or signposted) demonstrates that the pilot partially achieved the outcome. However, as the pilot ran for almost 12 months the figures of residents engaged is disappointing.</p> <p>Consideration needs to be given here to the fact that the outcome itself may not have been the most appropriate objective – engaging with residents concentrates on process rather than real outcomes. It may have been more meaningful if the outcome at planning phase was to actually achieve employment and/or training for tenants.</p>		
9. How much time has been involved in the project (include allowances for officer time)?	Officer time was allocated throughout the pilot to liaise with JCP adviser to consider how to increase engagement.	10. What were the actual costs of the project?	No budget was specifically allocated however; North Mcr Regen funded the printing of leaflets etc to publicise.

<p>11. Detail any plans to sustain the changes brought about by the project.</p>	<p>JCP pulled out of the pilot in March 2008 as they did not feel that the adviser was having the impact that was first envisaged.</p> <p>Stepping Stones subsequently agreed to become involved in a similar project and have since seconded an adviser to work in three of Northwards Housings' Local Services Offices along with other community based venues across North Manchester where resident engagement could be maximised.</p> <p>Learning taken from this pilot project will be utilised to increase resident engagement; which will hopefully lead to an increase in residents entering into training or employment and longer-term success of the project (a joint action plan has been developed to ensure sustained impact of the project).</p>
<p>12. Detail any unexpected outcomes (if any).</p>	<p>Helped to promote Northwards Housing's wider 'community regeneration' role; as detailed within the Community Regeneration Strategy.</p>

North Manchester Economic Regeneration Team

Northwards Housing

Jobcentre Plus

NORTHWARDS HOUSING EMPLOYMENT PILOT

EVALUATION REPORT

JUNE 2008



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1. Introduction

Following a meeting of the North Manchester Public Agencies Forum in late 2006, Garry Fergusson from Job Centre Plus (JCP) expressed an interest in working with the North Manchester Regeneration Team to pilot a project in North Manchester aimed at tackling worklessness.

Concurrently a mapping exercise was undertaken to map benefit claimants across North Manchester against Northwards Housing Estates. This showed a strong correlation between benefit claimants and residents occupying properties managed by Northwards Housing.

Thus a three way partnership between JCP, Northwards Housing and North Manchester Regeneration Team was formed to develop The Northwards Housing Employment Pilot.

2. The Pilot Project

2.1. Background

The Northwards Housing Employment Pilot was brought about by the high rates of worklessness across the North of the City. As previously mentioned, a correlation between workless residents occupying properties managed by Northwards Housing had been identified. As a means of tackling this problem, Northwards Housing were keen to develop an outreach service to encourage residents to access further training and employment opportunities available locally. This involved partnership working with JCP who agreed to second and adviser to work in two of Northwards Housing's Local Services Offices in areas where access to a Job Centre is difficult. The adviser was located at the White Moss Road office (Charlestown Ward) every Tuesday and Friday; and at the Monsall Street office (Harpurhey Ward) every Wednesday. It was decided not to place the adviser at the Cheetham Hill Road office due to its close proximity to the Job Centre.

2.2. Project Aim

The aim of the project was to engage with residents to help them access training and employment advice. A number of measures were utilised to increase referrals, including:

- JCP adviser engaging residents who came into the offices to access housing services.
- Northwards Housing officers referring residents to the JCP adviser.
- JCP adviser attending resident and local community group meetings.
- JCP adviser attending other local multi-agency events where residents would be likely to attend.

As this pilot was aimed at engaging hard to reach customers, no targets were set.

3. Evaluation Findings

3.1. Performance

The pilot ran between April 2007 and March 2008. The performance results below are based on the data provided by the JCP adviser.

A total of 102 residents were engaged. Although this number is relatively low, this is a reflection of the nature of outreach and the difficulty engaging those furthest away from the job market, rather than a reflection of the pilot as a whole. The JCP adviser found the most useful means of engagement to be actively engaging residents in the offices, at group meetings and at other events.

A targeted leaflet drop to estates adjacent to the Local Services Offices was also tried as a means of increasing referrals, however, only 13 residents responded to the publicity produced in an initial surge of interest following the leaflet drop. This was especially the case with residents living on the Dam Head Estate where interest subsided fairly soon afterwards.

3.2. Analysis of Engagements

Table I

Analysis of Engagements						
	Total	JSA	IS	IB	NEET	Other
Total	102	35	38	25	3	1
White Moss Road	58	21	21	14	2	0
Monsall Street	29	8	9	10	1	1
Other	15	6	8	1	0	0

Table II

Clients Referred / Signposted								
Support Agency	Stepping Stones	JCP	MAES	Connexions	Learnet	Next Step	CIS	Total
	16	18	5	3	6	9	1	58

There were considerably more engagements from the White Moss Road office, with more than double the amount of residents engaged there than at the other location. There was a relatively even spread between the key target groups with the majority being Income Support (IS) claimants, followed by Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants.

In comparison with the Working Neighbourhoods Pilot - a DWP pilot aimed at testing the extent to which a programme of local level intensive work focused action is effective in addressing long standing barriers to work, experienced by residents of deprived areas - which engaged a higher proportion of JSA, this project was more effective at engaging more hard to reach groups claiming IS and IB.

In terms of where those engaged have been signposted, Table II highlights the range of support agencies with the majority of referrals being made to Job Centre Plus and Stepping Stones.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Best Practice

The project successfully engaged a total of 102 residents. It tested the approach to providing employment advice within frontline housing offices and managed to successfully signpost a number of residents to further advice and guidance. A range of issues was identified and a number of areas of best practice were established. The project:

- Established effective partnership working between Job Centre Plus and Northwards Housing
- Improved the level of awareness and understanding of the employment support needs of local residents
- Provided a more local service to residents enabling them to explore training and employment opportunities
- Provided a framework for the development of a citywide, replicable model

4.2. Lessons Learned

A number of lessons were learned which should be considered when developing similar future projects:

- All new tenants are required to have mandatory interviews with Northwards Housing officers where action plans are put in place to help them to secure their tenancy; this mandatory process could include a requirement for new tenants to be referred to employment support agencies (where appropriate)
- The role of frontline housing officers is vital to the success of the referral process; 'referral champions' to be identified in each office; or incentives introduced for frontline housing officers to maximise referrals
- Other referral avenues to be explored (e.g. Northwards Housing Money Advisers who have regular contact with residents)

- Targets for all partners should be set to achieve objectives. Regular progress meetings involving all organisations are needed to maintain high profile and ensure that targets are being met
- Closer links with other local stakeholders (i.e. community and faith groups, support agencies) and link in to other local initiatives (e.g. the credit union)
- Engagements should be maximised through both referrals and actively engaging with residents
- A rolling programme of publicity and promotion of the project is needed to sustain interest
- Alternative local community based locations for advisers need to be identified to maximise referrals
- Tracking and monitoring of individuals progression should be undertaken to establish effectiveness/impact of project
- Local successes to be publicised to demonstrate outcomes to local residents