

# **West Dunbartonshire Council**

## **Report by the Director of Education and Cultural Services**

**Children's Services Committee: 13 December 2006**

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**Subject: West Dunbartonshire NEET Action Plan**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1** To present for information and retrospective approval the West Dunbartonshire NEET Action Plan prepared for submission to the Scottish Executive by 31 October 2006.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1** The Scottish Executive outlined their strategy to reduce the proportion of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in the policy document More Choices, More Chances issued in June 2006. While Scotland has one of the highest rates of employment for 16 -19 year olds in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the proportion of young people from this age range who are NEET has remained high over time. In October 2004 national figures indicated that 13.5% of 16 -19 year olds had NEET status. Evidence suggests that young people who finds themselves in the NEET group are more likely to remain economically inactive into the future.
- 2.2** West Dunbartonshire is one of 7 NEET 'hot spot' areas identified by the Executive. The aim is to reduce the NEET population in these 7 areas in order to make an impact on the national figures.
- 2.3** West Dunbartonshire Council and West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership have responsibility for taking forward the Workforce Plus Action Plan and NEET Action Plan within the theme of reducing worklessness. Within this overall partnership structure the Youth Employability Group, the sub-group of the Business Growth & Employability Strategy Group, was asked to take forward the development and the implementation of the NEET Action Plan. The Youth Employability Group has representation from all of the key partners and is led by Education & Cultural Services. (The NEET Action Plan is attached as Appendix 1)

### **3. Main Issues**

- 3.1** The NEET Action Plan follows the template issued by the Scottish Executive. It outlines the corporate structures within which the plan sits; provides national and local audit information regarding the NEET group; provides an analysis of the labour market and includes details of actions to achieve target reductions in the overall NEET group and key sub-groups.
- 3.2** The Action Plan outlines a range of activities to be taken forward by all of the partners focussing on both preventative and reactive strategies to tackle barriers to employment, education and training for young people in the 14 – 19 age group. As the Action Plan targets are to be achieved by 2008 some of the actions can be put into place immediately others require further planning and will form longer term strategies.

### **4. Personnel Issues**

- 4.1** In order to carry out further audit and implement the plan, additional posts are proposed within Education & Cultural Services and the Community Planning Partnership. The proposed staffing structure to support implementation is outlined in detail on page 34 of the Action Plan. The new posts will be taken forward on a temporary basis supported by additional Scottish Executive funding.

### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1** The 7 hot spot areas have each been granted additional funding of £800,000 for the period up until March 2008. As the letter of grant was only issued to local authorities by the Scottish Executive in November 2006, it has been agreed that the spend can be profiled in such a way as to target most spending in the financial year 2007/2008.
- 5.2** The Scottish Executive has issued interim guidance regarding the criteria for spending the additional funding. This places an emphasis on changes to infrastructure and other sustainable development and suggests that short term measures and enhancements to existing mainstream services will not be agreed. Approval from the Scottish Executive for the 06/07 spending plans outlined in the Action Plan is awaited. Profiling of the remaining funding requires to be submitted to the Scottish Executive by the end of January 2007.

**5.3** There has been lengthy discussion with Scottish Executive representatives regarding the short term nature of the funding, given the long term nature of the difficulties for young people in this grouping. It has also been emphasised that many successful strategies depend on additional staffing resources for effective implementation. Given the constraints outlined to date there requires to be further joint planning between partners as to the most effective way to spend the resources made available.

## **6. Recommendations**

**6.1** Elected Members are asked to note and approve retrospectively the West Dunbartonshire NEET Action Plan.

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**Background Papers:** There are no background papers

**Wards Affected:** All Wards affected