

MEETING	B&NES HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD
DATE	25 October 2017
TYPE	An open public item

<u>Report summary table</u>	
Report title	Bath & North East Somerset Virtual Employment Hub
Report author	Benjamin Woods, Group Manager Economy and Culture
Attachments	None
Background papers	Economic Strategy: http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/siteimages/Planning-and-Building-Control/Major-projects/ba192_economic_strategy_05.pdf
Summary	The report provides an update since the Economic Strategy Review was presented in 2015 and an introduction to the B&NES Virtual Employment Hub
Recommendations	The Board is asked to agree that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Virtual Employment Hub (VEH) approach is supported • Health colleagues are supported to contribute to the VEH process
Rationale for recommendations	The Health & Wellbeing Strategy identifies the priority 'all residents have access to training and employment. Currently, B&NES services who could promote this priority do not all have the same level of information available about what support they can access or about the wider benefits of work to an individual. Employment support and training partners could benefit from a better understanding of the health & wellbeing support available to residents
Resource implications	Funding for the web portal and other external support is via secured S106 development contributions to employment & skills activities. Officer time will come from existing resources. Engagement of health colleagues in the process: likely to be six steering group sessions and possible one-to-one meetings
Statutory considerations and basis for proposal	Councils have the power to address the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of their area. This addresses economic prosperity: public health and inequality
Consultation	
Risk management	A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

THE REPORT

1. Context

1.1. The B&NES Health and Wellbeing Strategy recognises the importance of skills development and employment to tackling health inequality. We know that areas with higher rates of poor health correlate with areas of low income which equally correlate with areas of lower educational attainment. The impact of this is illustrated in the Health & Wellbeing Strategy:

“There’s life expectancy gaps of over 8 years (and increasing) exist for men living in different parts of B&NES. Just 5 stops on a local bus route.”

1.2. The Public Health England ‘Health Profile for England’ chapter on social determinants of health clearly states that the long-term unemployed have a lower life expectancy and worse health than those in work. Of those people who are out of work and claiming benefits due to ill health, over the last five years the majority have been out of work due to mental health issues at around 51% consistently.

1.3. There is also an increasing body of work nationally which recognises the wider links between the quality of employment and a person’s health. The Paper also states: “The workplace can either support health and wellbeing and the health system can actively support people into work in a virtuous circle or the workplace can be unsupportive and health and work systems can work against each other”.

2. Opportunities

2.1. Under the umbrella of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy employment support, skills development and health have developed mechanisms for coordination, recognising the synergies between the outcomes that we seek to achieve.

2.2. Since the Health & Wellbeing Board received a report on the Economic Strategy review in 2015 progress has been made against the action plan. A number of areas of progress present a key opportunity for joint working to achieve the outcome set out in the Health & Wellbeing Strategy; for all residents have access to training and employment.

2.3. Enterprise Zones:

- 9500 new jobs in Bath
- 1700 new jobs in the Somer Valley

Businesses locating into Enterprise Zones (EZ) can access certain benefits for being in an EZ area. This includes things like business rate discount, superfast broadband and clustering around key sectors. Offering these benefits to business enables us to have an early conversation with businesses as they think about locating here.

2.4. Devolution:

- Adult Education Budget
- In-Work Progression Pilot
- Work & Health Programme

As one of the local authorities within the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) area we are able to work with WECA on shaping delivery of the devolved skills and employment funding. With direct control of funding, we are able to determine outcomes for the Adult Education Budget locally and work with providers on delivery of those outcomes. We will directly deliver the in-work Progression Pilot in B&NES to help people who are on low pay, low hours and / or unstable contracts to increase their earnings. We can work with the Work & Health Programme provider to ensure that they complement our local area support offer.

2.5. Social Value:

- Construction (development management)
- Procurement
- Licencing

The council has developed a toolkit to ensure that we achieve social value from our own or partner investments in the area. Developers submitting planning applications are required to offer training places to B&NES residents; contracts procured by the Council are subject to similar requirements and through licencing of the new casino we have secured guaranteed interviews for 50 B&NES residents.

2.6. As a large employer:

- Work experience
- Time to Change

Some examples using our own resources as a local large employer are our Work Experience policy which we are beginning to use as a resource to support service users and the Council's Time 2 Change pledge and action plan, written by HR and Organisational Development, to reach our own employees.

2.7. Business Engagement:

The Business Growth team have developed InvestInBath as a communication channel and are building a business engagement strategy. We can use this to deliver key messages. For example, we know that employers are currently operating in a tight labour market, they should therefore be more motivated to talk about accessible employment and accessing a more diverse workforce.

3. Coordination: The Virtual Employment Hub

3.1. Employment support and skills development is currently taking place across B&NES funded via diverse funding streams and although there are efforts in place to coordinate, these can be time consuming and often rely on staff connecting by chance.

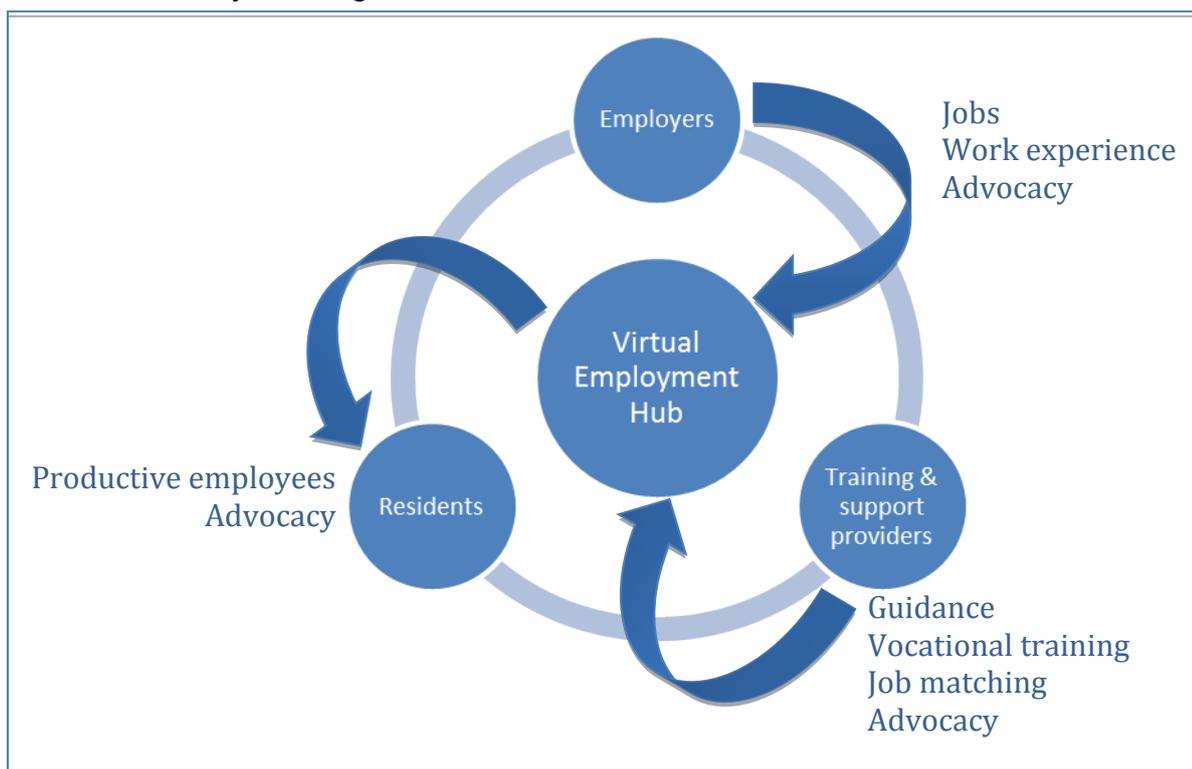
3.2. We have therefore identified an opportunity to coordinate this activity in three ways:

3.3. **Live information:** the Virtual Employment Hub - a web portal which will pull together locally available jobs and the support that residents can use to access those jobs. Currently it can be hard for professional support workers to know what is available for the clients that they are working with; with the planned jobs growth through the development of the Enterprise Zones we need to enable residents to access the support available directly. This web portal will show residents the jobs available and

directly link them to training and employment support that enables them to access those jobs.

3.4. **Joint working:** as part of early discussions with colleagues about the Virtual Employment Hub, it has become clear that as well as better information, service delivery across all partner organisations could benefit from systematic joint working. We are therefore implementing a process to review the approach we currently take to support our residents to access employment and to develop a shared approach across partners which improves signposting across all available services. This approach will be user-led to ensure that the outcomes of our services align with the outcomes that users are seeking to achieve.

3.5. **Communications strategy:** The Virtual Employment Hub will have a ‘knowledge’ section for residents, one for employers and one for providers. The process of developing joint working will also enable us to develop key messages. These key messages will be developed into a content marketing strategy to increase traffic to the portal and as a communications platform. This involves understanding what the audience is searching for and then optimising the content for search engines and through social media. The marketing industry has identified that this approach delivers 54% more leads on average than traditional marketing and we can use this to deliver key messages to our audiences.



4. Conclusion

4.1. We therefore recommend that the Health & Wellbeing Board supports the proposed approach and endorses the involvement of health colleagues in developing joint working. We value any feedback from the Health & Wellbeing Board either specific to the opportunities identified or on the Virtual Employment Hub proposal.

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