

North West Housing Forum
Representing **Members** Across **The North West** Region

Housing and Worklessness

Good Practice in the North West Region

February 2009

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Section 1 - Introduction

OVERVIEW

- 1.1 The North West region has long been at the forefront of developing and implementing innovative solutions to tackle deprivation, economic inactivity and inequality.
- 1.2 Housing has often played a central role in delivering these solutions, with providers taking a lead to trial new products and services with strategic authorities establishing partnership arrangements to bring about improvements at a local level.
- 1.3 This briefing paper has been prepared by the North West Housing Forum on behalf of Housing Northwest to highlight recent examples of best practice from across the region where housing products, services and/or providers have sought to tackle issues around worklessness.
- 1.4 The first section of this report provides an introduction to worklessness, including an overview of the concept's ascendancy within the housing sector. The second outlines a number of examples of good practice in the field and concludes with a summary of the main findings to emerge from the review.

WORKLESSNESS

- 1.5 The term 'worklessness' is a growing feature of welfare and employment policy, extending beyond a simple measure of unemployment to also include those who are economically inactive.
- 1.6 Within this concept, a broad definition of unemployment is adopted to include all those of working age who are out of work and actively looking for a job rather than just those entitled to claim Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), as included within official claimant figures.
- 1.7 By including economically inactive individuals, worklessness as a concept also takes account of people of working age who are not:
 - In employment
 - In full-time education or training
 - Actively seeking work
- 1.8 Whilst many will be outside the labour market on a voluntary basis, perhaps because of family responsibilities or early retirement for example, there is evidence to suggest that many others want a job and would work if they had the right opportunity, incentive or path back into employment.

WORKLESSNESS IN THE SOCIAL HOUSING SECTOR

- 1.9 Professor John Hills report into 'The Future Roles of Social Housing in England' (2007) highlighted increasing concentrations of deprivation, low levels of income and economic inactivity within the sector.
- 1.10 Hills observed that by Spring 2006, more than half of those living in social housing and of working age were without paid work, a figure twice the national rate.
- 1.11 Since the publication of the report, there has been much attention on the relationship between worklessness and social housing. In particular, debate has centred on what can be done to:
- Increase the attention given to the management and allocation of existing stock
 - Support a greater income mix within existing communities
 - Broaden approaches to tenant engagement, in particular to enhance the economic activity levels of tenants and others in housing need
 - Offer a more varied housing and employment 'menu' for both prospective and existing tenants
- 1.12 In February 2008 the then Housing Minister, Caroline Flint, provided further impetus to the debate by raising the possibility of linking access to work with tenancy. Flint's comments arrived as the government gave greater recognition for the role of employment in improving social mobility and boosting regeneration initiatives.
- 1.13 Many of the issues raised had a particular resonance in the North West. As a consequence, the regional housing field has responded with bespoke pilots and new ways of working to ensure that housing can support, encourage and share the benefits of economic growth. Specific examples of good practice are included in Section 2.0 of this briefing paper.

The following good practice examples have been gathered from local authorities and housing providers across the region. They are schemes that are having to constantly adapt to meet changing circumstances and will change over time. The organisations that have submitted this work are keen to share their skills and experience with others in the region.

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLES

2.1 **BOLTON AT HOME**

Overview

The Transforming Estates Initiative is a co-ordinated programme of action to generate improvements in housing, the environment and access to economic opportunities. It is seeking to enhance existing estates and create opportunities for resident communities to access the predicted growth in jobs in Bolton over the next 10- 15 years

Project Details

Bolton at Home are working closely with Economic Development, Health, RSL partners and the voluntary sector to develop initiatives which support and encourage tenants to raise their aspirations and understand what their options are in relation to training and job opportunities.

An action plan is in place which contains a mixture of quick wins and longer term initiatives.

Outcomes

- 100% household survey including partner RSL tenants (approx 25,000 households) - complete
- Audit of existing interventions/services available for base level support
- Joint training/awareness raising for frontline staff to enable them to signpost to specialist advisors
- Investigation into a range of pre to post tenancy incentives linking to the environmental enhancements and new build elements of the initiative
- Positive marketing to highlight the benefits of training/employment and the range of opportunities available
- Development of an Exemplar Employer scheme – offering apprenticeships, careers, local procurement opportunities etc

Highlights

- Detailed primary research/ customer profiling to understand local needs
- Multi agency approach to tackling worklessness with joined up information and actions
- Enhanced front line worker knowledge and referral arrangements
- Integrated incentive and reward schemes
- Exemplar employer activities

For further information contact Debbie Selby debbie.selby@boltonathome.org.uk

2.2 CARLISLE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Overview

Carlisle Housing Association is a member of the City Employment Partnership which links unemployed people to training and job opportunities via activities such as job fairs, training courses, liaison with local employers.

Project Details

The Skills for Life project aims to provide training courses in basic computing, CV writing, budgeting and confidence building. Working with Carlisle College and Cumbria County Council, the association was able to promote a 'Lunch and Learn' programme via tenant newsletters, panels and resource centres.

Working with The Learning City Initiative, a partnership of learning providers including Carlisle College, the University of Cumbria and Connexions, two courses were developed aimed at NEET individuals:

- NVQ Level 1 in Horticulture
- An Introduction to Interior Design

Carlisle Housing Association provided funding to pay for work wear, kit and other incentives including vouchers and tool kits.

Outcomes

- Enhanced skills to support access to employment
- Increased confidence (*One tenant gained confidence to apply for and obtain a job after being unemployed for ten years*)
- New learning opportunities with potential to progress into mainstream learning

Highlights

- Participation in high level, strategic partnerships
- Pragmatic operational partnership working
- Engagement of hard to reach groups
- Alignment of funding to add value to existing programmes
- Enhanced referral arrangements
- Incentive and reward scheme

For Further Information contact Anne Quilter Anne.Quilter@Carlisleha.org.uk

2.3 ELEVATE EAST LANCASHIRE

Overview

In 2008, Elevate East Lancashire commissioned comprehensive research to quantify the scale of public and private sector construction expenditure and measure the impact of such investment upon the employment and training needs of Pennine Lancashire.

Project Details

The 'Training Skills Gap' Report identified that the level of construction expertise within the sub-region was insufficient to meet the needs of the variety of large construction projects proposed, this includes Building Schools for the Future, Housing Market Renewal and other public sector building schemes.

The report advises that there is likely to be demand for around 3,600 construction workers over the next three years, posing significant local employment opportunities. In particular, there is scope to train local unemployed people in the most in-demand trade areas, thereby tackling worklessness and retaining investment expenditure within the sub-region.

Outcomes

The report highlights a suite of recommendations geared to:

- Increase provision and funding for apprenticeship opportunities
- Address skills shortages within the construction sector
- Provide a scheme to connect students and employers

Highlights

- Better intelligence to inform discussions with partners
- Demand-led approach to tackling worklessness
- Maximising the impact of public sector investment

For further information contact Jeff Smithson jeff.smithson@elevate-eastlancs.co.uk

2.4 **FUSION 21**

Overview

Fusion21 has been operating a successful construction skills programme since 2002; it links the procurement of capital and cyclical works within the Housing sector to the creation of training opportunities and sustainable local employment.

Project Details

The Skills Programme is delivered from two sites in Merseyside incorporating workshop, classroom and IT facilities.

Programme trainees undertake 3 weeks of intensive training with the Fusion21 Team developing practical skills and qualifications to enable them to start on site as soon as they commence their employment. This includes the following training:

- First Aid
- Manual Handling
- Health and Safety
- Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS)

Once in employment the Fusion21 Skills Team continues to work with the graduates and their employers, monitoring progress, employers training plans and studies for NVQ qualifications.

Outcomes

Fusion21 has achieved national recognition for its achievements and positive contributions to both the social housing sector and the construction industry:

- Creating 574 permanent jobs with Fusion21 contractors
- Providing vocational training to over 700 Merseyside residents, many of whom have gained NVQ's in key construction skills
- Generating an estimated financial benefit to Merseyside boroughs in excess of £19m, through regular paid work and reductions in benefit claims
- Winning the first ever Housing Corporation Gold Award for 'Innovation In Procurement' 2006;
- Winner of Women in Construction Awards 2008 'Best Training Scheme

Highlights

- Coordinated approach involving local authorities, housing associations and training agencies
- Scalable employment model, transferable to other regions and sectors
- Self financing - maximises the impact of existing investment
- Contractual commitments creating guaranteed job opportunities following training
- Promoting continual self development

For further information please contact Jan Agger jan.agger@fusion21.co.uk

2.5 GM PROCURE

Overview

GM Procure is a not-for-profit regeneration company made up of several local social housing providers, including Salix Homes and Stockport Homes.

GM Procure works in partnership with landlords and their chosen contractors to create opportunities with long-term social and economic benefits for the communities where work is taking place.

Project Detail

Activity is co-ordinated around 3 specific targets:

- Recruit 2 trainees for every million pounds worth of labour contract - with 20% from a 'non-traditional'
- Support three small contractors each year
- Create or support one community enterprise each year (ie. B4Box)

In order to make sure these aims are achieved GM Procure has employed a skills specialist – Manchester Solutions – to manage the whole process.

As well as working with contractors to ensure trainees are taken on, GM Procure have helped create a construction taster course with Stockport College.

Outcomes

- Increased skills, rates of employment and average earning amongst participants
- Training in construction to NVQ level 2 and 3 for local people
- Empty properties brought back into use/ properties improved

Highlights

- Partnership working to provide projects of scale
- Maximising the benefits of existing investment programme
- Recruitment of specialists to support bespoke training
- Variety of entry methods to widen participation inc traditional apprenticeships and taster courses
- Support for other social enterprises

For further information contact Fiona Benn fiona.benn@gmprocure.com

2.6 HALTON HOUSING TRUST

Overview

Halton Housing Trust (HHT) recognises that it has a broader role to play than the provision of good quality housing and neighbourhood services.

It is committed to contributing to the communities it serves and is providing opportunities for its customers and the wider community to improve their circumstances.

Project Details

HHT is seeking to tackle worklessness through a variety of mechanisms:

- As a direct provider of employment
- Through partnership working with local agencies which provide training, education and employment support
- By actively contributing to Local Strategic Partnership groups and other sub groups such as the Employment, Training and Diversity Sub Group it has established with its investment partners
- By working closely with schools assisting with curriculum development and participating in programmes such as Industry Week
- Via its Financial Inclusion Strategy to support customers to move away from a reliance upon welfare benefits

HHT is also developing a range of other projects including:

- A recruitment open day to advertise vacancies, apprenticeships, pre-employment training programmes in housing and construction and social enterprise opportunities
- Social enterprise schemes linked to affordable furniture provision, DIY services and gardening

Outcomes

- Since January 2007 HHT has employed 19 trainees and apprentices via the 'Halton People in to Jobs' initiative

- HHT has worked with its three main construction partners to ensure local employment opportunities are realised via their Decent Homes programme of investment – this rate is as high as 80% in some areas
- During June and July 2008, 14 managers and employees participated in Industry Week initiatives within local schools
- Progress towards Diploma status for 'Construction and the Built Environment' for schools within Halton

Highlights

- Breadth of commitment across HHT to tackling worklessness
- Maximisation of local employment opportunities linked to investment programmes and leverage with partners
- Active participation in existing groups, forums and schemes
- Strong links with the education sector
- Development of complimentary support i.e. linked to financial inclusion

For further information contact Christine Mcloughlin christine.mcloughlin@haltonhousing.org or Noel Sharpe Noel.Sharpe@haltonhousing.org

2.7 HOME GROUP LTD

Overview

Research undertaken by Home Housing during the late 90s identified three common themes across its most challenging neighbourhoods; unemployment, inter-generational tensions and environmental issues.

At that time a decision was taken to address these issues by forming residents groups in all three areas and supporting the community centre committees to improve community infrastructure.

Project Details

The Home to Work (HTW) project was originally launched in 1998 and has now progressed to become a socially owned charity enterprise. It provides services, training and job opportunities linked to construction, gardening and decorating activities in deprived neighbourhoods in the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership area.

The aims of HTW are:

- To provide employment and training for socially excluded individuals
- To provide sustainable solutions via services in deprived neighbourhoods

In 2007, a business arm was developed, Works 4 You, which sells commercial services allowing cross subsidy of contract income into the

charity. This has significantly increased income and reduced the dependency on grant income.

A range of partners have been involved over the lifetime of the project. Current partners include Connexions, Westfield Housing (RSL), Cumbria County Council, JHP Training, Job Centre Plus, elected representatives, voluntary sector officers, community volunteers and residents/tenants. The following Home facilitated schemes were initially in partnership with HTW

- **Home Grown** is a Copeland Homes based skills scheme for 16 to 19 year old people who would not normally access the labour market and who are referred through Connexions Cumbria. Linking jobs and skill shortages to clients drawn from Home's neighbourhoods. Cumbria Housing Partnership procurement scheme provides access to opportunities with suppliers; this is based on the innovative employment and skills levy approach
- The **Phoenix Youth Project** works hand in hand with Local authorities & Connexions providing support for young people that stretches from good citizenship courses for all to NEET placements for target groups

Outcomes

- HTW, incorporating Works 4 You, has 14 full time members of staff -these were all previously unemployed residents from neighbourhoods of high deprivation
- Works 4 You has reduced dependency on grant income, generating £200,000 of commercial income in 2007
- HTW has provided training and development placements to over 500 clients in the past 10 years
- 120 participants have gained permanent employment
- Local environmental improvements delivered via HTW activity
- 19 young people have accessed employment through training via the Home Grown scheme
- The Phoenix Youth Project currently employs 6 local people as Youth Workers (3 of whom are Home tenants) supporting 350 young people per year

Highlights

- Progression from grant funded project to commercially viable social enterprise
- Tackling unemployment whilst delivering neighbourhood improvements
- Multi Agency Working
- Programme flexibility i.e. women only sessions
- Capacity building with residents to become Directors or undertake recruitment

For further information contact John.Cass@homegroup.org.uk or Sheila Moffatt sheila@hometowork.co.uk

2.8 LIVERPOOL STRATEGIC HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Overview

Liverpool's Jobs Education and Training (JET) service plays a major role in the strategic and delivery framework for employment and skills across the city and has highlighted *housing issues* as one of the key barriers to a journey back into the labour market.

The development of a joined up Liverpool approach of integrating existing provision in housing, skills and employment will therefore be a vital element for achieving 'sustainable skilled working communities' across Liverpool.

Project Details

Liverpool is currently embarking on a joint research and development programme with the involvement of RSLs to establish an agreed 'Liverpool Offer' for tackling worklessness. This includes:

- Research into the extent of worklessness in the social housing stock
- Linking the finding with existing agendas linked economic development and child poverty
- Developing enhanced proposals from the RSLs to reduce worklessness,
- Identifying changes in policy or funding streams which would enhance the revised approach

Liverpool City Council is currently developing an integrated approach pilot with Riverside Housing that will be tested in 2 or 3 LSOA's where there are high levels of concentrated worklessness. This will inform the research and development programme.

Outcomes

- Shared data/ intelligence to better inform collaborative understanding and the development of needs based interventions
- Initial use of cross sector secondments between RSL and JET services to develop multi skilled approach to housing and employment
- Joint awareness, skills and knowledge events for front line staff
- Extension of Liverpool's 'Job Café' approach to include RSL involvement
- JET staff involvement in the RSL neighbourhood forums
- Supply and publicising of current job vacancies and training opportunities in RSL outlets
- Joint locations wherever possible
- Development of a caseworker model

Highlights

- Increased collaboration between economic development and housing
- Maximising the opportunities linked to existing groups, staff and services
- Multi agency training events for front line workers
- Information sharing and enhanced programme development

For Further information contact Kim.Griffiths-Parry@liverpool.gov.uk

2.9 PLUS DANE GROUP

Overview

Plus Dane Group is focused on creating clean, safe and well managed neighbourhoods which encourage residents and businesses to invest.

It also adopts a joined up approach to service delivery to provide a full package of support to unemployed residents or those at risk of exclusion.

Project Details

The Group operates a Social Enterprise called IN Environmental (formerly INclude) which delivers environmental services. The enterprise provides unemployed individuals at risk of permanent exclusion with employment for up to 1 year followed by support into permanent employment.

A second enterprise, IN Places, has also recently been launched which adapts the model to the provision of training in repairs, maintenance and facility management, for young and unemployed people.

The Group also combines the services and resources of some 8 agencies, which are organised around unemployed tenants and residents to give them the status of customers able to commission the support they need to secure training and employment. This takes 3 forms:

- Intensive support for the 50 most challenging customers exploring whether family support can reduce costs and improve their life objectives
- A floating support package for those at risk of permanent exclusion
- A tenancy assessment to enable all staff to identify tenants at risk of exclusion at the outset and introduce early support

Outcomes

- Employment and training opportunities for 50 people at risk of exclusion
- Personalised support into follow on employment
- Environmental improvements and building maintenance to enhance the appearance, attractiveness and safety of neighbourhoods for residents and businesses
- Coordinated responses from partner organisations in relation to personal, housing, employment and training support resulting in approximately 50 local people accessing employment in the last 18 months

Highlights

- Engagement of hard to reach groups back into the labour market
- Progression from a grant funded project to a commercially viable enterprise with a turn over of almost £1.5 million per annum
- One of the largest employers in an area with little economic activity
- Improved appearance of the area has helped to attract other employers and investors such as Tesco, who aim to create 500 new jobs in the area and are committed to ring fencing 75% of those jobs for local unemployed people
- The Social Enterprises offer a replicable model
- Mainstreamed coordinated partnership working

For further information contact Sonia Bassey sonia.bassey@neighbourhoodinvestor.com.

2.10 **ROCHDALE HOUSING INITIATIVE & GUINNESS NORTHERN COUNTIES**

Overview

Rochdale Housing Initiative (RHI) and Guinness Northern Counties have been sponsoring a very simple interior design training scheme that attracts women back into learning.

Project Details

The scheme comprises of an initial one week taster course (one morning per week) followed by progression towards a level two/three qualification over the next 30 weeks (again one morning per week). The course is delivered locally by a training mentor.

Outcomes

The Participants on the course gain:

- Knowledge, skills and a qualification that can be used to enter a career in design/ decorating

- General employment skills linked to time management, communication and problem solving
- Increased self esteem and confidence which will help them access other courses or take up new roles

Highlights

The main highlights of the scheme relate to its:

- Attractiveness to participants who have been away from education and learning for some time
- Ability to develop employment skills in a relaxed, enjoyable and subconscious way
- Provision of individual support via mentoring to overcome personal fears and barriers
- Promotion of complimentary courses linked to literacy/ enterprise

For Further Information contact Darryl Lawrence rhimanager@zen.co.uk

2.11 SALIX HOMES

Overview

Salix Homes supports and promotes existing Social Enterprises to maximise employment and training opportunities in its local community.

Project Details

Salix Homes provides support to the First Step Trust's (FST) Smart Project - a social enterprises business in Salford that provides MOT's servicing, repairs and recycling of end of life vehicles. Assistance is provided by:

- Requesting that our construction partners use this enterprise to MOT and repair some of their vehicles
- Promoting the enterprise via the Salix Homes newsletter, intranet and promotional deal for staff
- Exploring other opportunities via GM Procure

Outcomes

- Increased sustainability and growth of the social enterprise
- Greater employment opportunities for local people with mental health problems and other disabilities or disadvantages

Highlights

- Supporting existing social enterprises
- Maximising leverage opportunities with contractors

For further information contact Joe Willis Joe.Willis@salixhomes.org

2.12 **SALIX HOMES**

Overview

Salix Homes is seeking to increase the prospects of local residents finding employment.

Project Details

A bespoke Tackling Worklessness database and referral system for Salix Homes customers and other residents has been developed. This links to Manchester Work Solutions (MWS) who are responsible linking people in Salford to employment/education and training opportunities.

Support is given to residents to complete a registration form which includes information about qualification and skills, previous work experience and future employment aspirations.

Salix Homes enter these details into the database which is accessed by MWS. Once MWS receive the applicant's details, they then arrange an Information Advice Guidance interview (IAG) to establish how best to support them into employment, education or training. MWS then engage with the employer/training provider to establish a placement.

Monthly update meetings with MWS have been agreed to monitor the progress of each of the applicants.

Outcomes

This system has only recently been launched and will be promoted at future events and via newsletters. To date there are 12 Salford residents registered on the data base.

All applicants are also considered for direct referral onto local initiatives such as B4 Box, STEP and Youthbuild when opportunities arise.

Highlights

- Effective referral arrangements
- Enhanced customer information
- Customer support and monitoring

For further information contact Joe Willis Joe.Willis@salixhomes.org

2.13 STOCKPORT HOMES

Overview

The Transient Learners Course is short training course designed to provide those in temporary accommodation with practical skills to improve their circumstances.

Project Detail

Stockport Homes' Customer Involvement Team designed a 'Getting Back into Work' course, in partnership with Stockport Continuing Education (SCE) and 'Stockport Into Work'. This was tailored to the needs of customers using temporary accommodation and Resettlement & Tenancy Support Services.

The three week course had 3 aims:

- To give service-users the confidence to engage with staff and other members of the community
- To give participants the skills to maintain a tenancy
- To provide practical assistance to get back into work inc CV writing

Outcomes

At the end of the course one service-user commented that *'I have never felt so supported in all my life, I feel so much more confident now than I did at the beginning'*. This same service-user then went on to attend Stockport Homes Temporary Accommodation Expert Panel (TAEP), where they made a huge contribution to the day.

- 2 service-users went on to access one to one support from the course tutor and have both applied for jobs as a result of the course
- Since the course finished, a Resettlement service-user has gone on to successfully gain employment as a result of accessing the services provided by 'Stockport Into Work'

Highlights

- Multi agency working
- Bespoke course suited to specific needs of the user
- Use of incentives with practical functions such as memory sticks to store CVs on and copies of other documents
-

For further information contact Tanya King tanya.king@stockporthomes.org

2.14 THE OLDHAM HOUSING INVESTMENT PARTNERHIP

Overview

This Social Housing provider liaison group aims to work together to provide an integrated strategic approach to delivering sustainable neighbourhoods and communities throughout Oldham.

Project Detail

OHIP have recently set up a Worklessness Group in response to Government and National Housing Federation encouragement for RSLs to get involved in this field.

This brings partners together to further local housing providers contribution to the worklessness agenda.

Outcomes

The group is still in its infancy but intends to:

- Collate information and map current activities by members
- Co-ordinate local activity
- Share information and best practice
- Explore funding opportunities

Highlights

- Information sharing forum
- Pooling of expertise
- Co-ordinated responses that avoid duplication

For further information contact Paul Dickson Paul.Dickson@regenda.org.uk

2.15 THE REGENDA GROUP

Overview

StartNow! aims to remove barriers to employment and to empower adults in Fleetwood to move into education, training or employment.

Project Details

The project has two employees who provide advice on job search, training, completing application forms, interview skills and CV writing. They work on an outreach basis across a number of estates.

There are a range of partners involved in the project including Regenda, the police, Job Centre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau and other local agencies. Sure Start manages the project on a day to day basis with Lancashire County Council as the statutory body.

A steering group made up of current funders, supporting agencies and StartNow! staff meets on a quarterly basis to discuss the focus of the project, share information, offer support and direct future activity.

Outcomes

- Tailored support to meet individual needs
- Practical assistance to re-enter education or employment
- Significant progress - to date the project has assisted 368 people

Highlights

- Multi agency working, referral arrangements and drop in sessions
- Provision of matrix accredited advice and guidance
- Basic skills support and practical assistance
- Flexibility in the programme to respond to customer wishes

For further information contact Paul Dickson Paul.Dickson@regenda.org.uk

2.16 THE REGENDA GROUP

Overview

Fleetwood Forward Volunteering is a supported volunteering programme which seeks to raise levels of volunteering, particularly amongst those suffering social exclusion.

Project Details

The programme recruits and provides training to volunteers, known as Support Volunteers/ Mentors, who then use their skills to attract and support others into volunteering opportunities.

This has included one-to-one support to Wyre Housing Association residents who may not have had the confidence to volunteer on their own.

The Volunteer Centre, Blackpool, Fylde & Wyre manage the project with financial support from The Regenda Group. The project works in partnership with Wyre PCT, Wyre Borough Council, Job Centre Plus, Community Mental Health Teams, Lancashire County Council and a number of Voluntary and Community Groups including a number of tenants and residents associations.

Outcomes

- 101 new volunteers recruited
- Increased capacity of the local voluntary sector and community groups
- Personal development for the volunteers including progression to permanent employment

Highlights

- Funding a post within an existing organisation offered better value for money and was more effective than employing a worker directly as existing knowledge, infrastructure and partnerships were already in place
- The use of mentors helped to overcome personal fears and barriers
- Volunteering as a stepping stone into employment

For further information contact Paul Dickson Paul.Dickson@regenda.org.uk

2.17 THE REGENDA GROUP

Overview

The 'Clean Up Team' operated until March 2006, offering training and work experience opportunities to people with learning difficulties or those experiencing long term unemployment.

Project Details

Participants were offered training and 12 months employment as a trainee gardener. This included support to work towards NVQ1 or 2 in horticulture.

Trainee gardeners worked in teams to clear and maintain the gardens of elderly and vulnerable tenants and residents.

The project was managed by staff from West Pennine Housing Association's neighbourhood regeneration team in partnership with Oldham Housing Investment partnership and First Choice Homes Oldham.

Outcomes

- 50 Oldham residents with disabilities were employed on the project
- 23 participants moved into mainstream employment
- 44 participants have obtained their NVQ level 1 in Amenity Horticulture or units towards it
- 426 garden visits were made in the last 12 months of the project
- 81,715 square meters of communal land were cleared – the equivalent of 10 football pitches
- Regenda now employs a team of 6 permanent staff offering Landscape services

Highlights

- Engagement of hard to reach groups
- Support to increase skills, gain qualifications and progress into permanent employment
- Wider benefits for local residents benefiting from gardening services

For further information contact Paul Dickson Paul.Dickson@regenda.org.uk

2.18 THE RIVERSIDE GROUP

Overview

The Riverside Group have undertake a variety a variety of actions to help tenants into training and employment, ranging from apprenticeship opportunities to targeted support for tenants. Indeed, helping tenants to become more prosperous is now a key objective of the organisation.

Project Details

The Riverside Group has contributed to a wide variety of employment initiatives including ILM placements, apprenticeships and job opportunities for the long term unemployed via:

- Maintenance contracts
- Fusion 21 procurement partnership
- Kensington 'Clean Team' – landscaping/ environmental maintenance
- Circle Liverpool Ltd – recycling venture with Plus Dane and Seddon

More recently the organisation has been focusing on developing local and strategic partnerships with training, employment and financial inclusion providers, including Working Links, Shaw Trust and Liverpool JET, to bring about co-ordinated support for tenants. This has been accompanied by customer profiling, neighbourhood audits and training for front line workers.

Outcomes

- Enhanced intelligence about workless tenants
- Provision of direct and in-direct job opportunities
- Training and job shadowing for frontline workers
- Multi-agency outreach workers working from local housing offices and resource centres
- Increased promotion and better targeted support

Highlights

- Maximising the impact of business expenditure in relation to employment opportunities and supporting social enterprises
- Multi-agency collaboration/ service alignment
- Better intelligence and enhanced referral arrangements
- Coordinated needs based support for tenants

For further information contact Stephen Chapman Stephen.Chapman@riverside.org.uk or Katy Proctor Katy.Proctor@riverside.org.uk

2.19 **TRAFFORD COUNCIL**

Overview

Trafford Council's Housing Service is keen to engage with the worklessness agenda and is currently formulating its approach in this regard.

Project Details

Though work is at an early stage key initiatives include:

- Information sharing with colleagues from Economic Development and local RSLs on actions to tackle worklessness
- Trafford MBC to adopt a central role in the collection of good practice and identification of joint working opportunities
- Engagement with Business in the Community by the multi agency Homelessness Forum
- Investigation of Exemplar Employer opportunities with Human Resources

Highlights

- Development of better links between the authority's Economic Development and Housing Services departments
- Partnership working with other RSLs
- Central point to collate best practice and scope joint working opportunities
- Engagement of other partners with experience in the field

For further information contact Jane Broughton Jane.Broughton@trafford.gov.uk

2.20 **TRAFFORD HOUSING TRUST**

Overview

Trafford Housing Trust is currently scoping out the range of possible interventions it could make in relation to worklessness.

Project Details

The Trust is currently focusing on their role as an employer, including potential opportunities to offer work placements and/ or apprenticeships.

In addition, they are developing their approach to financial inclusion, and looking at opportunities for wider regional collaboration in partnership with the Airport Group of RSLs.

Outcomes

Trafford Housing Trust has re-designed their Employment Application Forms to focus on life skills and behaviours rather than work experience and qualifications.

They have also introduced Assessment Centres as part of their recruitment process to observe applicant in a relaxed setting rather than at a formal interview.

Recently the Trust has offered 2 placements in HR and Regeneration which have worked well.

Highlights

- Changes to recruitment practices
- Direct provision of employment/ placement opportunities to disadvantaged groups
- Support for future partnership working including other RSLs and local schools

For further information contact Kathryn Aspray kathryn.aspray@traffordhousingtrust.co.uk

2.21 **WIGAN AND LEIGH HOUSING**

Overview

Wigan and Leigh Housing have developed their 'Pathways into Training and Employment' project to tackle concentrations of deprivation within Council Estates, particularly inter-generational trends, following the results of research undertaken on behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership.

Project Details

The project works with Year 10/11 pupils from deprived communities, to provide work placements and possible follow on opportunities to become apprentices with the ALMO.

Apprenticeships and graduate trainee opportunities are also advertised to encourage people from deprived communities to apply. Recruitment and selection processes have been adapted to support those furthest from the employment market.

Outcomes

- The research undertaken by Wigan and Leigh Housing has heavily influenced the Local Area Agreement (LAA)
- Up to 30 apprentices are employed at any one time
- Intake of people from deprived communities has increased from 10% to over 50%
- Model is being adopted by Wigan Council and local health partners

Highlights

- Replicable model
- More representative workforce
- Maximising the impact of existing investment
- Changes to recruitment policies and selection processes

For further information contact Ashley Crumbley A.Crumbley@walh.co.uk

SECTION 3 - SUMMARY

- 3.1 These examples of good practice highlight the breadth and diversity of work being undertaken across the North West. Whilst varied in nature, a number of important consistent themes have emerged in the compilation of this report that are explored in more detail below.

THE VALUE OF BETTER INTELLIGENCE

- 3.2 In some instances, partners have undertaken detailed research to accurately assess the location and scale of worklessness within a specific area to better understand the nature of worklessness amongst their customer base. This information has helped to target interventions more appropriately, identifying priorities in terms of:

- Geography
- Client group (e.g. sole parents or over 40's)

- 3.3 In other cases, intelligence has been gathered relating to the future demand for skills, particularly relating to the maintenance or construction programmes of housing agencies. This information has been used to inform:

- Conversations with training providers
- Contractual arrangements with contractors i.e. obligations to take on local apprentices

THE IMPORTANCE OF MULTI AGENCY WORKING

- 3.4 Local authorities and housing providers recognise that although they have a key role to play, they cannot tackle worklessness in isolation. Other agencies possess specialist expertise and/or have resources available to tackle the diverse range of factors influencing an individual's ability or desire to access employment.

- 3.5 Opportunities exist to work more closely and there is demonstrable evidence across the region that where efforts have been devoted to developing multi-agency approaches involving both statutory and voluntary sector agencies there have been significant benefits. These multi-agency approaches range from strategic partnerships with education and employment, through to single access points and enhanced referral arrangements.

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- 3.6 Partnership working features strongly across the good practice examples included within this report, with projects such as Fusion 21 and GM procure showcasing the opportunities apparent when partners join forces. These primarily relate to:

- Economies of scale – maximising the resources available to support training/ employment opportunities
- Sustainability - due to the volume of work generated by partners

- Replicability of models – across other service areas/ locations

PERSONALISED SUPPORT

- 3.7 The breadth and range of good practice examples cited illustrates that there is no 'one size fits all' model to address worklessness. Instead, support must be tailored to the needs of the individual in a co-ordinated manner.
- 3.8 The provision of complementary support, including confidence building, budget planning and other assistance, has been highlighted as a critical success factor by a number of projects both in terms of encouraging access but also continued participation. In some instances this has involved intensive support on a one-to-one basis.

STEPPING STONES INTO EMPLOYMENT

- 3.9 The creation of flexible initiatives is important, particularly to meet the needs of those with mixed abilities and engage those who have been detached from education or employment for long periods.
- 3.10 Good practice exists across a series of projects where a mixture of taster sessions, short courses, work-placements or various qualifications levels have been offered, helping to encourage participation.
- 3.11 The use of incentives and rewards is noted in some instances, to help motivate individuals and encourage progression. The practical nature of such rewards, such as memory sticks to save CVs or a set of tools, is to be commended as these offer further support to the participant in future.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

- 3.12 Some authorities and housing providers have taken a proactive approach to supporting employment opportunities within their neighbourhoods by:
- Reviewing recruitment practices
 - Increasing work-placement and apprenticeship opportunities
- 3.13 This sends a clear message to partners about their commitment to tackling worklessness and also assists in making the workforce of such organisations more representative of the communities which they serve.

MAXIMISING THE IMPACT OF EXISTING INVESTMENT

- 3.14 Many housing providers have reviewed their procurement processes to ensure that their expenditure supports wider socio-economic goals with notable progress in relation to maintenance and construction.

- 3.15 Work ranges from increased support for social enterprises, apprenticeship requirements from appointed contractors and support for training schemes.

EARLY ENGAGEMENT

- 3.16 Increasingly, interventions have sought to engage individuals at an early age, in some instances working with schools to offer work experience placements to those age 14-15 or targeted support to young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs).
- 3.17 Such early intervention is felt to be particularly important where rates of inter-generational unemployment are high.

SECTION 4 - ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 4.1 The North West Housing Forum has developed this publication to share and promote good practice in the region. Thanks go to all Members who have contributed examples, and for agreeing to share their work and expertise with others.
- 4.2 The main drafting of the report has been carried out on behalf of the Forum by Danielle Gillespie of Inner City Solutions, with further contributions from Pete Bailey and Sue Powell.