

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE - EQUALITIES

17 SEPTEMBER 2012

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR CHILDREN

GENESIS PROGRAMME – REPORT ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to up date the Committee regarding the progress of the Bridgend Genesis 2 project and to highlight future funding arrangements following the withdrawal of WEFO funding.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The Bridgend Genesis 2 project contributes to many of the Corporate Priority themes, but especially to:
- Bright Future: New opportunities
 - Bright Future: Healthy living
 - Bright Future: Young voices
- 2.2 The main participant target group of Bridgend Genesis 2 is lone parents in receipt of Income Support and this is a key initiative in taking forward the 'worklessness' agenda in Bridgend County. The project provides meaningful interventions for those furthest away from the workplace, and fills a gap in provision, as the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) Work Programme is not available to lone parents with children under five years-of-age. Genesis has a major role in ensuring that this disadvantaged group is 'work ready'.
- 2.3 Bridgend's Regeneration and Environment Partnership has recently named the 'worklessness' agenda as a priority for its Skills Sub-Group to seek to address; thus mirroring the policies of the Welsh and UK Governments.
- 2.4 Genesis 2 will contribute towards a response to Core Aim 7 of the Child Poverty Strategy which seeks to ensure that no child or young person is disadvantaged by poverty. The project actively supports and encourages single parents to take up training with the goal of moving them towards employment and so will contribute to a reduction in the number of children and young people living in workless households.
- 2.5 Working in collaboration with both the Families First and Flying Start programmes Genesis 2 will provide support to the most disadvantaged families to enable them to access learning, training and volunteering opportunities and thus improve skill levels of parents on low incomes so that they may progress towards providing a financially secure environment for their families. Whilst parents are engaged in

learning/volunteering opportunities Genesis can provide high quality childcare that will improve childrens' social, emotional and intellectual development and ultimately improve a child's outcomes.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Bridgend Genesis 2 project commenced on 1 October 2008 with a full complement of staff in post and with an active programme of participant engagement and supporting activities in place. This was possible through the support of Bridgend County Borough Council who recognised the value of the project to disadvantaged families in Bridgend and also acknowledged the achievements of the project's predecessor Bridgend Genesis 1. The Council fully supported the transition from Genesis 1 to Genesis 2 through a period of funding uncertainty (between April – September 2008) prior to the successful securing of ESF (European Social Fund) Convergence Funding under Priority 2 – Increasing employment and tackling economic inactivity.
- 3.2 Following the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) introduction of the new Work Programme in June 2011, WEFO (Welsh European Funding Office) asked all Convergence Priority 2 projects to revisit their Business Plans to take account of the new employment support provision. Alongside this the senior sponsor and strategic management responsibility for the Genesis Wales 2 project was moved to the Employability and Skills Division of Welsh Government's Education and Skills Department. From January 2012 a more regional structure has developed; Bridgend being placed in the South East region with Rhondda Cynnon Taff taking the lead.
- 3.3 The Genesis Wales 2 project aims to increase labour market participation and specifically concentrates on lone parents in receipt of Income Support, parents not in receipt of benefit or not in work and focuses on moving them closer to the labour market or into work. Helping this particular client group into work can be a cost effective way to ensure their social inclusion and a route out of poverty for them and their children. The project provides a package of easy to access client centered support to facilitate engagement with individuals who may otherwise be excluded from training, volunteering or work opportunities. The project provides appropriate support to participants who are not eligible to support from the DWP's Work Programme (introduced in June 2011). Support provided includes assistance to overcome a variety of barriers faced by participants including childcare, transport, debt and housing issues, low self esteem and lack of self confidence, poor educational achievements, low aspirations and poor life development skills.
- 3.4 The Bridgend Genesis project also works with a small number of participants who are currently employed but who have post natal depression and the project works to support them back into or to remain in employment or onto other specific support projects to avoid them becoming economically inactive.
- 3.5 Labour market participation is at the heart of the objectives of Genesis. Wales, and in particular the Convergence areas, have a long recognised issue of economic inactivity. 16% of Welsh children live in workless households and this percentage is considerably higher in West Wales and the Valleys (Convergence area) with economic inactivity remaining three percentage points higher in Wales (24.8%) than the UK (21.4%). (Source: Nomis, Labour Force Survey)

4. Current situation

- 4.1 The Bridgend Genesis project aims to make a positive and measurable difference to the lives of 947 participants (by June 2014) through the following:
- An up-skilling effect
 - Reducing inactivity
 - Employability and employment outcomes
 - Sustainable change addressing family poverty
- 4.2 Specific activities include group and 1:1 support in order to help identify and overcome barriers to engagement and/or development that participants may have to aid progression into education, learning or the labour market, including acquiring new skills, building confidence, raising aspirations and self esteem and gaining qualifications. Evidence suggests that personal adviser led interventions combined with appropriate mentoring and action planning are effective in engaging with the hardest to reach. Uniquely, Genesis Advisers will meet potential participants wherever the participants feel most comfortable, e.g. in the participant's own home.
- 4.3 One of the key features of the Genesis project is its highly qualified and experienced mobile crèche team. In some areas where childcare is not readily available, or is not flexible enough, the Genesis mobile crèche team is able to support the childcare needs of parents whilst they participate in the training opportunities offered by the project. Genesis training is delivered within the participants' own community and the Genesis mobile crèche is able to take childcare into areas of high social deprivation where registered childcare provision is often sparse or non-existent. Many Genesis participants have never previously experienced professional childcare and this initial opportunity builds the confidence of parents to use formal childcare. Childcare can offer parents new opportunities to access training and work and thus help lift families out of poverty.
- 4.4 Since October 2008 Bridgend Genesis 2 has delivered 79 taster/confidence building courses in the community all supported by the mobile crèche team. Taster/confidence building courses can include sessions covering paediatric first aid, craft (including simple clothing repairs and alterations), CV writing and job search, women's self defence, tackling debt issues and budgeting, nutrition, healthy eating, childcare search, careers advice and career planning. In addition to this the project has worked in collaboration with, and made the mobile crèche available for, the P.R.A.M.S. team (Peri-natal Response and Management Service), and CMHT (Community Mental Health Team) supporting 32 P.N.D (Post Natal Depression Support Group) and M.U.M.s (Moving Up Mums) groups in Bridgend. We also work with Flying Start to support ELKLAN (Speech and Language training for parents to help them embed sound communication skills in their children's language development) and Women's Aid to support the 'Freedom' course. We also offer a rolling programme of the Food Standards Agency 'Get Cooking' course and training and accreditation in Food Hygiene Level 2.
- 4.5 The Genesis project can work across all areas of the county borough and community training has been delivered in Caerau, Maesteg, Bettws, Llangeinor,

Cefn Cribbwr, Pyle, Porthcawl, Pencoed, Bridgend town, Brackla, Ogmores Vale and North Cornelly.

4.6 Participants are supported and encouraged throughout every step of their journey. Following Genesis interventions 78 participants have entered the Further Education system with an additional 30 participants due to commence their FE studies in September 2012. Experience informs us that those participants who enter the FE (Further Education) sector with our support are equipping themselves in the best possible way to enter the labour market or take up Higher Education opportunities. A particular example of this is:

- A lone parent with one child
- Supported to enroll at Bridgend College to study BTEC National Certificate in Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- Successfully completed with straight distinctions
- Awarded Bridgend College 'Student of the Year' in Electrical/Electronic Engineering
- Gained an apprenticeship with Tata Steel – to which she said *"It was one of the best moments of my life so far, I had worked so hard to get on the scheme and my future is looking bright"*
- Now supported, through Tata Steel, to study HNC in Engineering Maintenance

4.7 The Genesis project positively encourages its participants (who are mainly female, lone parents 65%) to explore and take up training/career opportunities in non-traditional employment and business routes. To this end we have commissioned training providers (Neath Port Talbot College (Caerau Skills Centre), XR Training and Bridgend College) to offer taster courses and OCN accreditation in vehicle maintenance, general building maintenance and 'Breaking The Barriers' a taste of DIY course. Some course participants have progressed into further learning and employment in areas such as motor mechanics, plumbing and painting and decorating.

4.8 To date (May 2012) the Bridgend Genesis 2 project has achieved:

- 553 participants enrolled on the project
- 129 participants have gained qualifications
- 100% pass rate for participant's studying Food Hygiene Level 2
- 294 participants have gained 'other positive outcomes e.g. gaining intermediary outcomes as a result of participation in an ESF-funded project such as completing courses, entering voluntary work or attended a job interview. Intermediary outcomes are those which are achieved as part of the journey to achieving final outcomes, such as entering paid employment or gaining qualifications
- 370 participants have received support with caring responsibilities
- 94 participants have progressed into further learning
- 29 participants have gained employment – a good result considering the current economic climate and the projects' participant group – 'furthest away' from the labour market and with multiple barriers to participation

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

- 5.1 This is an information report and has no implications for the Council's policy framework or procedure rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

This is an information report and as such, no Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out. However, this report provides the Committee with information which will positively assist in the delivery of the Authority's equality duties.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 Bridgend Genesis 2 currently has an ESF grant allocation of £1,833,555 with an actual ESF grant spend to date (May 2012) of £1,065,295 (58%). There is an expectation that the project will operate over a 6 year period with participant activity ending June 2014 and project closure completed by September 2014.

- 7.2 The All Wales Genesis Wales 2 Business Plan states that *"Overall, the ambition for Genesis Wales 2 should be to mainstream activity into local authority delivery; indeed a number of authorities have already begun to integrate the project into wider support mechanisms. Some Local Authorities may therefore consider opportunities to mainstream elements of the support post 2012"*

- 7.3 Planning for future European funded programmes is underway and WEFO have published results of their Reflections Exercise. Skills and employment has been identified as a high priority. Work streams are being established to consider the technical details of future programmes. From Bridgend, Lisa Jones has been appointed to the Delivery and Compliance workstream and Mark Halliwell has been appointed to the Evaluation and Monitoring workstream.

- 7.4 The Welsh Government has made a statement on their priorities for future programmes which emphasizes education, skills and lifelong learning to include actions aimed at early years (primary age). Also emphasized was helping people into work through initiatives with strong employment outcomes.

8. Recommendation

That the Cabinet Equalities Committee receives and considers this report.

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Background documents

None