



TACKLING WORKLESSNESS IN MARYPORT

TOWARDS AN ACTION PLAN FOR SERVICE AGENCIES

April 2009

1. What is this report about?

- 1.1 This report summarises the outcomes from the Maryport Worklessness Circles of Need project, commissioned by Allerdale Borough Council in January 2009 and completed in April 2009. The work was carried out by Social Regeneration Consultants and Eljay Research.
- 1.2 The report briefly explains the project context and process. It puts forward a draft Action Plan and makes practical recommendations on how changes in service delivery might be implemented. It is aimed specifically at service agencies which provide on-going support for workless people in Maryport, most of whom took part in the project's consultation process.
- 1.3 This is one of a number of reports on this project which can be accessed through the Customer Services Directorate at Allerdale Borough Council. The other reports are:
- "All I want to do is work..."* A study of worklessness in Maryport March 2009
- "It's been really good..."* Talking to workless residents and service providers in Maryport April 2009
- Outcomes report for the Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership April 2009
- "Things that would help..."* Talking to Workless Residents of Maryport and the Services available to them April 2009

2. Project aims

- 2.1 Allerdale Borough Council is the lead authority for the Transformation agenda in Cumbria and is working with the Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (CIEP) to deliver a pilot project aimed at meeting the needs of workless people in the Maryport locality.
- 2.2 Maryport was chosen as the locality for the pilot due to its high levels of worklessness, including within its boundary some of the worst wards for deprivation in the country, such as Ewanrigg.
- 2.3 In addition, there is a mature working partnership in the town between residents, councillors and service providers. Due to these factors it was felt that needs and opportunities coincide to provide a workable project addressing the needs of a specific and growing segment of the Maryport population.
- 2.4 The Cumbria Improvement and Efficiency Partnership is using a common methodology for its Transformation work, based on the concept of 'Circles of Need'. This includes developing and putting into practice a customer needs-led culture, gaining customer insight through engagement and statistical analysis and collaborating with others to provide a more effective and efficient service.

2.5 The aims of this project were therefore:

- To provide a common approach to meeting the needs of workless people in Maryport across a range of service providers who are directly or indirectly serving the needs of workless people
- To obtain a clear understanding of the issues of workless people and the barriers preventing them from working or accessing services
- To map existing services to workless people in Maryport

3. Project context

3.1 Worklessness generally refers to people who are unemployed or economically inactive and who are in receipt of working age benefits. This is the definition we have used throughout this project.

3.2 4 million people of working age are currently living on benefits in the UK; 1 in every six households with working age members are workless; our country has a higher proportion of its working age population living in workless households than any other European Union country except Hungary, Poland and Belgium.

3.3 Just under 2000 people were workless and claiming benefits in the Maryport area in May 2008, a figure which has itself already increased significantly. Around half of these claimants were on Incapacity Benefit; 12.5% of them on Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). Those claiming JSA have now more than doubled, to 600 current cases. Nearly 600 Maryport residents have been claiming benefit for more than five years.

3.4 Maryport's Ewanrigg ward has the third largest concentration of workless people in Allerdale – nearly 1 in 4 of the working age population.

3.5 These are all chilling statistics and the position is certain to get worse as the current economic recession bites. Job Centre Plus has recently declared a National Emergency to deal with rapidly increasing numbers of claimants. The issue of worklessness has never had a higher priority.

3.6 Maryport is well served by agencies with a role in tackling worklessness or supporting workless people. The project made contact with 25 organisations, from the public, private and voluntary/community sectors, all of them with an interest in worklessness in Maryport.

4. Project process

4.1 The project involved a 10 stage process, with regular input from Allerdale Council's project team, set up to oversee the work. In summary this involved;

- Customer profiling

- A service provider survey
 - An outcomes analysis
 - A workless people survey
 - Three worklessness focus groups
 - A gap analysis
 - Service delivery feedback
 - An analysis of project outcomes
 - Project evaluation
- 4.2 28 service provider representatives were involved in the service provider survey; we also talked to one Allerdale Councillor and one Cumbria County Council councillor, both representing wards in Maryport and a resident member of the Maryport Partnership with a special interest in worklessness issues.
- 4.3 230 workless people were interviewed for the workless people survey, in their homes, on the street or at the Job Centre Plus office in Maryport. This was a statistically valid sample, although there was an inevitable bias towards those people claiming Job Seekers Allowance, rather than Incapacity Benefit, the latter being particularly hard to reach.
- 4.4 Eleven of the workless people involved in the survey were also involved in two of the three focus groups. These added important qualitative information to the quantitative outcomes from the interviews and surveys, as well as bringing workless people and service providers face to face to discuss practical solutions to current problems.

5. Project outcomes

- 5.1 There is clearly significant interest in the worklessness issue in Maryport. With one exception, all the service providers were keen to be involved in the project, offer their views and share information about their work. The workless people who attended the focus groups provided a highly valuable input to the discussions and outcomes. The interest in and enthusiasm for finding solutions to often intractable problems was both important and encouraging for the future delivery of worklessness services in Maryport.

What service providers said

Workless people

- 5.2 Job Centre Plus is currently seeing 600 people each week in Maryport and managed to place 500 people into jobs in 2008. Inevitably, job placements have now dropped significantly. Job outcomes from other service providers are relatively small – the Trades Hall placed 16 people into jobs in 2008, whilst the Way into Self Employment project helped 22 people set up their own businesses.
- 5.3 The time service providers spend with individual workless people varies hugely – from under 10 minutes, to, in one case, 128 hours, reflecting the complex nature of worklessness and, in some cases, its links to a variety of other social issues, such

mental health. From information provided by service agencies, there appears to be little correlation between time spent with individuals and positive job outcomes.

Partnership working

- 5.4 Most service providers are used to working in partnership and many are already involved in the Maryport Partnership, but direct partnership working between them seems to be more limited. Job Centre Plus, Routes 2 Work, the Ways into Self Employment project and the local health service appear to partner up better than most. Some service agencies, particularly those in the voluntary and community sector feel excluded from some partnership arrangements. Local authority departments do not appear to have a good track record of partnership working at locality level, at least as far as Maryport is concerned.
- 5.5 Two thirds of service providers would welcome the establishment of a Worklessness Network for Maryport, provided it shared and publicised information and was not just another talking shop. Those agencies that were less keen on this idea were concerned about duplicating existing arrangements, were worried about the locality focus and one or two even thought this would not fall within their remit.

Workless record keeping

- 5.6 Less than a third of the service providers in Maryport hold records of workless people and only five of them share statistics. No agencies share individual records, due to confidentiality and data protection issues. Allerdale Council's Homeless and Housing Benefit records did not include information on worklessness at the start of the project, but this is now being changed.
- 5.7 Most service providers do not collect or analyse data on a locality basis, ie for Super Output Areas in Maryport. Several service providers also made the point that many workless people may not want to be identified, especially those on Invalidity Benefit.

Priority workless needs

- 5.8 Service providers see people with a wide range of workless needs, but five stand out as their most frequent customers, listed in order of importance below:
- People with low qualifications
 - People with no or inappropriate skills
 - People claiming benefits, but capable of work
 - People on low incomes or with an unsatisfactory job
 - Young people trying to enter the jobs market for the first time

Barriers to work

- 5.9 Service providers in Maryport identified a number of barriers faced by workless people who may be looking for work. Top of the list amongst most of them was lack of personal motivation. Of equal, but secondary importance, were:

- Transport and childcare issues
- Lack of support and encouragement
- Lack of basic skills
- No recent work experience
- Lack of confidence

5.10 The general view amongst most service providers was that individual employability and the neighbourhood environment were critical factors acting as barriers to work. Employer attitudes, information about worklessness services and access to these services were generally seen as positive, rather than negative factors. The implication here is that the provision of new training and job opportunities in Maryport would not, in themselves, crack the worklessness problem.

Overcoming barriers to work

5.11 Service providers identified six main factors that would help workless people overcome barriers to work. They included:

- Prioritising personal development training, to improve basic skill levels
- A bigger emphasis on job matching
- Coordinated support from providers
- Better signposting between providers
- Tackling the access problems created by inadequate public transport
- Engaging local employers with job seekers and potential job seekers, especially in schools

What service users told us

Workless profile in Maryport

5.12 The profile of the 230 workless people we interviewed can be summarised as follows:

- 54% were male; 46% were female
- 14% were young people aged 16-24; 46% were aged 25-49; and 40% were over 50
- Although 99% described themselves as White British, 8% felt they had language problems
- 25% had a long term limiting illness
- 75% lived in households with no children
- 60% live in households where no-one works
- 95% had previous experience of paid employment
- Most of these jobs had been with small employers
- Two thirds had been unemployed for less than one year
- 80% had been unemployed before finding a job
- Redundancy or contract termination were the main reasons for their current worklessness

5.13 Some of the comments they made included:

“I’d do anything to get a job...all I want to do is work”

“There should be more one-to-one help to explain what you can claim for. At present the system is not very easy to understand and it’s too impersonal”

“Whenever there is work it’s not local, so travel costs are an immediate barrier”

“The need to be unemployed for 6 months before you can get help with courses is ridiculous”

“I feel it has been up to me to find work for myself – all I’ve had so far in terms of support is introductions to possible job vacancies”

Reasons for worklessness

- 5.14 Workless service users put forward a number of reasons for not working, citing lack of local jobs, lack of adequate public transport, poor qualifications and lack of experience as the main barriers, in that order. Personal circumstances and the neighbourhood environment were not generally seen as important barriers – lack of jobs and access to them were the biggest problems.

Sources of advice

- 5.15 87% of service users had looked for a job in the previous four weeks, with a strong emphasis on personal contacts rather than through service providers – friends, family, schools and websites, alongside Job Centre Plus, were the most frequent sources of advice. Two thirds of workless people are looking for a full-time job; 1 in 10 of them are already volunteering as an alternative to paid employment.
- 5.16 Most workless people are satisfied with the services they receive from other public services in their neighbourhood.

Skill gaps

- 5.17 86% of workless people in the survey held at least one post-school qualification and one third had undertaken some form of training in the past 12 months. Despite this, many people felt there was still a gap between job requirements, when on offer, and individual’s skill levels. More basic training, formal qualifications and literacy skills were all felt to be important to equip them for available jobs.

Outcomes from the focus groups

- 5.18 All three focus groups were well attended and highly productive. For the first time, they enabled service providers and users in Maryport to discuss worklessness issues openly and look at practical solutions to current problems. The third focus group, which brought both providers and users together was particularly valuable, particularly in terms of shared understanding.

- 5.19 Workless people who came to the focus groups stressed how their situation undermines personal confidence, replacing it with feelings of embarrassment, low self-esteem, dependency and frustration. Feelings of worthlessness, not just worklessness are common. These feelings worsen over time, with prolonged worklessness, so additional help is needed to overcome barriers that people frequently have to surmount. There was a shared recognition that reversing a negative spiral of feelings can take time.
- 5.20 Current barriers to employment identified in the focus groups typically include:
- A lack of suitable/local employment opportunities
 - A lack of local training
 - A lack of support and encouragement
 - Poor and expensive transport provision
 - Poor childcare
 - Uncoordinated support services
 - Lack of confidence
 - Lack of work experience
 - Lack of basic skills
 - Lack of personal motivation
- 5.21 These barriers and their priority listing, very much mirror the outcomes from the service user survey findings. Lack of local jobs in Maryport, as large employers have left the town and a mismatch between those jobs that are available and local skills are clearly significant issues. The recent influx of foreign workers was also raised as a local frustration.
- 5.22 The need to travel further afield to access job opportunities or re-train to enter industries that are still recruiting raises two barriers – the cost and inconvenience of the existing public transport network; and the difficulties of accessing appropriate training courses. Service users feel that local training is often absent, benefits whilst training are halted, and there is a lack of information accompanying both.
- 5.23 Service users also feel that they are only provided with a bare minimum of information; they have to seek it out, often through visiting a number of different providers, none of whom seem to be properly coordinated. There is a frequent feeling of being slowly and anonymously 'processed', as opposed to being treated as a real person and positively assisted with appropriate and tailored information.
- 5.24 Service providers responded positively to these issues, but stressed that an inability to adapt central government policies and directives to local priorities was a major constraint. They accepted that individuals working for service providers often needed to have more specialist knowledge about the support, training and advice that is available locally, to avoid users being 'passed from pillar to post'. Arrangements for training, service user eligibility and the financial implications change frequently, particularly in the current economic climate; service providers themselves have difficulties keeping up with these changes, so it is not surprising that users find it something of a minefield.
- 5.25 There was agreement that all service providers would benefit from working more closely in partnership with each other, to coordinate services and make them more accessible'.

Service providers also highlighted the need for increased flexibility by those seeking work, adapting their aspirations to the realities of the current economic climate.

5.26 The practical opportunities for overcoming the barriers raised by workless people also included:

A lack of suitable/local employment opportunities

- Increasing awareness that some local employers are still recruiting and need to be specifically targeted to maximise the opportunities for local people
- Encouraging workless people to view volunteering as a positive step towards employment
- Encouraging Maryport residents need to collectively market themselves more effectively as a willing workforce, with appropriate support from agencies to enable them to do so

A lack of local training

- Advertising existing courses and resources (eg free computer training) more intensively across Maryport
- Targeting new training programmes specifically at individual and community needs in Maryport, with the eligibility and financial support criteria clearly explained and regularly updated
- Bringing trainers to Maryport, rather than expecting workless people to access it elsewhere would help encourage more people to take advantage of it

A lack of support and encouragement

- Other service providers using Routes to Work's model for a personalised and tailored approach to service delivery
- Improving signposting, to remove confusion amongst service users, and regularly checking up on the impact that support has on individuals
- Providing more staff time at Maryport Job Centre, to take a more holistic view of people's needs and target opportunities more appropriately

Poor and expensive transport provision

- Making more use of discretionary funds available to Job Centre Plus to offset the costs of travel to training and jobs outside Maryport and publicising them more widely
- Beginning a dialogue with Stagecoach about scheduling and discounted travel for workless people

- Resurrecting schemes such as the 'Wheels for Work' project, formerly run by Connexions

Poor childcare

- Providing better information and publicity on the extensive range of childcare opportunities available to workless people in Maryport

Uncoordinated support services

- Bringing together the large amount of information that is already available about services in one physical place in Maryport
- Retaining paper information, where appropriate, and not relying exclusively on web-based information points such as the DirectGov or Allerdale Council websites – 18% of households in Maryport do not yet have internet access and many of these will be workless households.

Lack of confidence and personal motivation

- Ensuring that information on vacancies at Maryport Job Centre is regularly updated, so people know when jobs are filled
- Promoting more volunteering, which helps prepare people for work, keeps them busy and motivated and extends their social networks
- Extending free or reduced rate fitness and keeping active sessions at leisure and health centres, to ensure workless people are encouraged to participate

Lack of work experience and basic skills

- Promoting work experience sessions for workless people, with willing employers
- More job coaching and mentoring to help people back into the world of work

Summing it all up

- 5.27 The project brought together a wide range of interests in the worklessness agenda in Maryport and has undoubtedly helped to focus everyone on how the needs of workless people can be met more effectively than in the past. It has exposed some important misunderstandings about the nature and causes of worklessness, flagged up the need for better signposting and coordination between service agencies.
- 5.28 Despite the criticisms expressed in the Service User survey, there is no doubt that service agencies are playing a positive role in tackling worklessness in Maryport, but that significant changes in the way these services are provided and coordinated would do much to improve the position, especially during the current recession.

5.29 Lack of personal motivation and other personal issues, seen as the main barriers to work by service providers, are not seen this way at all by service users, who see lack of local jobs and transport problems as far more important. To some extent this may reflect the under-representation of long-term workless people on Incapacity Benefit, in the survey. Nevertheless, workless people appear to be more motivated than most service providers think they are, which is a positive indicator for the future.

5.30 Matching service delivery with workless people's needs and expectations in Maryport is a significant challenge. The outcomes from this project suggest that the following would help:

- Improving **access** to training and jobs
- Changing the 'local job' **culture** amongst workless people, encouraging and enabling them to find work outside Maryport
- A mechanism for making public transport more **affordable**, perhaps through a fares subsidy for workless people or a similar subsidy for the first 6-12 months of employment in a new job
- A stronger **locality focus** by service providers, including local authority staff training on locality working
- Involving **local employers** directly with school leavers in local schools
- More emphasis on **information collection and statistical analysis** of workless people and households, particularly at locality level
- More effective **networking and information sharing** between service providers
- Establishing a user-friendly **one-stop shop** for local services in Maryport
- Improving customer care, through a greater emphasis on **individual support** (especially for workless people with special needs) and a more holistic approach to service delivery
- Exploring ways in which **non-worklessness service agencies** can support workless people, eg by providing easier access to motivational sports facilities and activities
- Regular **testing of service user needs** by service providers, to ensure services remain relevant to those they are targeted at
- Learning from **success stories** which service providers have achieved with long-term workless people

- Setting up a mechanism for ensuring that service providers and users in Maryport talk to each other on a regular basis, to deliver a more customer-focused service

6. Towards an Action Plan

6.1 The outcomes from this project have been very positive. Despite the worsening situation in relation to worklessness, there is a genuine interest amongst service providers and users to find new ways of overcoming barriers and smoothing the path back to work for people in Maryport.

6.2 Three specific areas for change are particularly important for service providers:

1. **Improving access to services**, with a more personalised approach towards workless people, a review of customer care procedures, improved access to services and information at locality level
2. **Better inter-agency working**, including the establishment of an information sharing protocol and an emphasis on holistic support packages for workless people
3. **Regular performance monitoring, continuous improvement and impact assessments**,

6.3 These activities, if they are to be delivered effectively, require a co-ordinating body to drive the changes outlined above. Allerdale Council is in a good position to take on this role...

- It commissioned this project
- It provides support for the Maryport Partnership
- It has a strategic role in tackling worklessness
- It has a clear locality focus

6.4 One of the first tasks the Council should undertake, as part of its worklessness remit in Maryport, is to help establish a **Worklessness Sounding Board**, within the Maryport Partnership structure. This would bring together service providers and users, building on the focus groups run as part of this project. It would be an advisory, not a decision-making group of up to 18 people, meeting quarterly, from September 2009. One of its first tasks should be to review the outcomes from this study and negotiate a programme of work with service providers to deliver an initial 12 month Action Plan.

6.5 One of the main outcomes of the project has been the strong interest shown by a number of workless people in Maryport in engaging in the debate about how services are provide to them. It will be important to keep this going, through the Sounding Board, but also in other ways as well. One model worth exploring is the **Community**

Learning Champions approach, where residents are trained to advise and provide information to workless people within their own communities, acting as a bridge between service providers and users.

- 6.6 Finally, there is merit in the establishment of a **central, accessible location in Maryport** where information about worklessness programmes, training, advice and support can be brought together under one roof; where service agencies can coordinate their activities and where the Community Learning Champions can be based. This centre does not need to be large or expensive to run, but it does need to be well-publicised, pro-active and seen by everyone as the first port of call for support. It would need to complement the Job Centre, in this respect.

7. Appendix

Project participants

The following people and organisations participated in the project and their contributions proved very valuable:

Title	First Name	Surname	Position	Organisation
Miss	Kerry	Anderson	Service user	
Miss	Sharon	Stamper	Service user	
Mr	David	Dean	Service user	
Mr	Mark	Hodgson	Service user	
Mr	Lee	Irving	Service user	
Mr	Paul	Lynn	Service user	
Miss	Tracey	McEwan	Service user	
Mrs	Hayley	Thurlow	Service user	
Miss	Avril	Wilson	Service user	
Mr	Michael	Wilson	Service user	
Mr	George	Wood	Service user	
Cllr	Carnie	McCarron-Holmes	Ewanrigg Ward	Allerdale Borough Council
Ms	Debbie	Keir	Principal Regeneration Officer	Allerdale Borough Council
Ms	Kim	Suttle	Housing Services Manager	Allerdale Borough Council
Ms	Carole	Watson	Customer Service Advisor	Allerdale Borough Council
Ms	Carole	Ruffe	Housing Benefits	Allerdale Borough Council
Ms	Sharon	Thompson	Interim Director of Customer Services	Allerdale Borough Council
Mr	Katherine	Higgins	Senior Human Resources Officer	Allerdale Borough Council
Ms	Sarah	Beattie	Democratic Services Manager	Allerdale Borough Council
Ms	Donna	Pim	Parent Support Advisory Service	Allerdale Borough Council
Mr	Brian	Irving	Area of Natural Beauty Manager	Allerdale Borough Council
Mr	Peter	Haley	Sport and Recreation Manager	Allerdale Borough Council
Mr	Martin	Horne	Business and Performance Manager	Carlisle Leisure Ltd
Mr	Don	Graham	Project Manager	Chamber of Commerce W. Cumbria
Mr	Andrew	Lewis	Personal Advisor	Connexions Cumbria
PCSO	Peter	Crome	Community Support Officer	Cumbria Constabulary
PC	Liz	Hampson	Police Constable	Cumbria Constabulary
Cllr	Keith	Little	Maryport East	Cumbria County Council
Ms	Stella	Kent		Derwent and Solway Housing Assoc
Ms	Julie	Wedgewood	Project Manager, Routes 2 Work	Derwent and Solway Housing Association
Ms	Lisa	Glynn		Derwent and Solway Housing Association
Mr	Robert	Porter	Director	Derwent and Solway Housing Association
Ms	Anne	Cunningham	Enterprise Development Worker	Enterprise Development Workers Project
Ms	Elaine	Simpson	Neighbourhood Regeneration Officer	Home North West
Mr	John	Cass	Community Regeneration Manager	Home North West
Ms	Moira	Lavery	Third Party Provision Team	Job Centre Plus

Tackling Worklessness in Maryport: towards an Action Plan for service agencies

Mr	Cyril	Wheat	Assistant Principal External Relations	Lakes College West Cumbria
Ms	Michelle	Fisher	Business Manager	Maryport Health Services
Mr	David	Cameron	Job Centre Manager	Maryport Job Centre Plus
Mr	John	Peel	Employment Sub-Group	Maryport Partnership
Mr	David	Sibbit	Headteacher	Netherhall School
Ms	Christine	Clark	Health Improvement Specialist	NHS Cumbria
Mr	Gordon	Henry	Programme Manager, Barnardos	West Allerdale Children's Centre
Ms	Mary	Bainbridge	Centre Coordinator	West Cumbria Trades Hall Centre
Ms	Gaynor	Ronsdale	Allerdale Co-ordinator	Young Cumbria