

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ECONOMY
11 MARCH 2010

EXETER POSITIVE STEPS FUND

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members about the outcomes and outputs arising from activities under Exeter Positive Steps Fund from projects funded since September 2008.
- 1.2 To recommend further financial contributions from the City Council to continue support to help people in Exeter on the pathway into employment through this Fund.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Exeter Positive Steps Fund was established after securing funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) Global Grants Programme. Global Grants were devised to enable small organisations to access small grants, £10,000 or below, to support work with unemployed people and help them move towards employment.
- 2.2 The Positive Steps Fund was launched in January 2006. The money from the Fund was available for allocation only to community and voluntary groups that help people of working age in Exeter, particularly those living in deprived wards, to improve their skills, build confidence, assist them on the road to work and/or improve their earning potential. Grant support has not been provided to support the administrative or other overhead costs of organisations.
- 2.3 The City Council in partnership with Devon Community Foundation (DCF), established the Exeter Positive Steps Fund with HSBC. Subsequently they were joined by Devon County Council and the Department for Education & Skills (now the DCSF) and an independent charitable trust, all of which contributed various amounts of funding to match the European Social Fund (ESF) grant of 45%. The ESF supported Fund provided grants totalling £350,000 to 50 projects helping 1,417 participants, with:
 - 221 taking up further training or education (16%),
 - 301 becoming volunteers (21%),
 - 110 finding employment (8%) and
 - 38 coming off benefits (3%).
- 2.4 As reported on the 4th September 2008, ESF funding ceased in March of that year. Members approved the release of £31,520 from the Economy and Tourism Budget 2008/09 to support the continued delivery of the Exeter Positive Steps Fund. Friends Provident and a local charitable organisation also each provided £20,000 as matched funding contribution.
- 2.5 The co-ordinator of the Fund continues to be DCF, using an outreach worker to encourage and support applicants from community and voluntary groups.
- 2.6 A panel, chaired by the City Council, made up of organisations from the public, private, and voluntary sectors reviews applications for grants. Target client groups include people who have disabilities, are lone parents and carers, long-term

unemployed, or have never worked, whose first language is not English, or are offenders or ex-offenders.

- 2.7 Priority areas for funding to reach target client groups defined as being most in need, include those living within parts of the following wards: Priory, St. David's, Newtown, Mincinglake, and Cowick. These areas accord with the priority areas identified by the City Council in partnership with members of the Exeter Positive Steps Fund and agreed as priority areas for joint activity through the Social Health and Inclusion Partnership (SHIP).

3. EXETER POSITIVE STEPS FUND

Unemployment

- 3.1 Unemployment in Exeter has risen significantly since the onset of the recession albeit having started to fall again more recently. The unemployment rate in Exeter in September 2007 was 1.2%, whilst in December 2009, the rate was 2.4%, amounting to 2005 people. In the most deprived areas of the city, there are higher unemployment rates of between 3.5% and 8.5%.
- 3.2 Whilst the number claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) in Exeter has been declining gradually since June 2009, the number claiming for more than 6 months has more than doubled since December 2007 from 200 to 530 people. In addition, the number of people unemployed for 12 months or more in Exeter has also increased from 90 people in December 2007 to 190 in December 2009, demonstrating that an increasing number of people are finding it difficult to return to work.
- 3.3 Moreover, in common with the county, regional, and national picture, the number of young people claiming JSA has risen faster than other age groups. Within the city, there are 670 young people under the age of 24 years claiming JSA (December 2009):
- 250 were aged 16-19 years (12.5% of all unemployment) – 150 males and 100 females
 - 630 were aged between 18-24 years of age (33% of all unemployment); of these, 115 have been claiming for over 6 months and 25 for over 12 months; of these 115 young people, 80 are males and 35 are females.

Future Jobs Fund

- 3.4 The Future Jobs Fund was launched in 2009 by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), which encouraged bids from projects to help primarily, long-term young unemployed people aged 18-24 years find work, anticipating jobs starting from October 2009 onwards.
- 3.5 Officers actively supported a Devon wide bid including Torbay to secure interest and job offers from local employers to create jobs for at least 6 months duration. A successful bid securing up to £6,500 per job was made to the Future Jobs Fund by the County Council on behalf of the partners, for the creation of up to 157 jobs, 49 of which are in Exeter, amounting to funding of over £318,000. A partnership support package for employers and employees has been established, which includes an employment skills course for the young people that will provide them with a range of skills and experience to support them in the temporary job, as well as helping them to find future employment.

Helping people to find work

- 3.6 However, despite a number of Government initiatives, it remains the case that people affected by multiple deprivation, the principal client group of the Exeter Positive Steps Fund are often not engaged fully and 'fall through the gaps' of support to help them on the pathway into employment.
- 3.7 On the face of it, Government initiatives provide an array of support to help people into work through Job Centre Plus programmes, such as 'Progress2work', 'Work Trials', 'Work Paths' and Flexible New Deal. These respectively are aimed at:
- allowing people who are eligible, primarily unemployed for more than 6 months and on job seekers allowance or some other benefits to try out a job, without losing state income, with an employer for up to 14 days to see if the employment suits both the employee and the employer
 - helping people who are affected by health and disability issues to overcome their barriers into work
 - helping people unemployed for more than 12 months with confidence building and the acquisition of new skills to find employment
 - helping people find work when they are recovering from drug use by providing specialist support for up to 13 weeks once an individual has gone into employment and or training
- 3.8 However many still find it difficult to access services and many are left in the dark about what is available, such as information on debt and mortgage assistance. Those without a strong support network are often unaware or are distrustful of the help available and are more at risk of falling through the gaps in the service.
- 3.9 Many individuals that have been supported through Exeter Positive Steps are affected by multiple issues, have limited networks and confidence and for a host of reasons will not access mainstream services due to an inability to cope with the bureaucracy, the processes or a general mistrust of 'the authorities'.
- 3.10 Not surprisingly, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and others have continued to urge local authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships (Exeter Vision Partnership) to continue to prioritise activity to help people find and stay in work.
- 3.11 A range of services and initiatives of the City Council contribute to helping people affected by worklessness, including through: -
- housing advice and provision of support and temporary accommodation for people who are homeless
 - funding additional debt advice and support for residents through provision from Exeter Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB)
 - advice and guidance in starting up a small business through Exeter Business Support
 - workforce development of people affected by worklessness through the Exeter Positive Steps Fund.

Progress of Exeter Positive Steps

- 3.12 Grant support, totalling £48,810 has been given since October 2008 to 11 groups in Exeter that have taken a variety of approaches in supporting unemployed people. In addition, the independent charitable trust partner within the Exeter Positive Steps Fund donated a further £35,000 to four of these Positive Steps funded groups.

- 3.13 The overall cost of the 11 projects undertaken since October 2008 is £132,279 making the Exeter Positive Steps Fund grants contribution equate to 37% of overall project costs. Taking into account the contribution from the charitable trust, the Fund has 'successfully' leveraged £118,469 in additional funding. Appendix 1 contains a summary of the projects funded.
- 3.14 Members should note that not all applicants supported have completed their projects, thus total actual outputs are not yet available. However, most groups have either achieved or overachieved on their targets with only a couple of groups narrowly missing them.
- 3.15 In terms of monitoring equality of opportunity for support on the road into work, projects recorded the following from individual participants. It should be noted that any one individual may fall into one or more categories, for example, one might be a lone parent/carer who is also in need of training to enhance basic skills. Out of all the 245 participants supported thus far, 103 are male and 142 are female:
- 66 had a first language that was not English
 - 69 were from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups
 - 19 had some form of disability
 - 10 were carers
 - 91 had basic skills needs
 - 31 were offenders or ex-offenders
 - 21 were young people
 - 142 were unemployed
- 3.16 Of those people supported by the Fund, 39 have gone into employment, 2 have come off benefits, 19 have gone on to further training, and 37 have gone on to volunteer work as a further step to improve their confidence, skills and experience.
- 3.17 The numbers and ages of participants supported to date by Exeter Positive Steps are set out below:
- 16 – 19 years – 29 people
 - 20 – 29 years – 118 people
 - 30 – 44 years – 73 people
 - 45 – 59 years – 21 people
 - 60 – 65 years – 4 people

Monitoring Visits

- 3.18 In November 2009, Devon Community Foundation and the independent charitable trust undertook project monitoring visits to assess progress and the context of performance, a summary of their findings are set out below.
- Some participants had not progressed as quickly as others because of their different starting place; for example in their abilities, skills, homelessness, drug or alcohol dependency, other health problems, levels of confidence and self esteem, trust and motivation.
 - Projects worked well by :
 - adapting to an individual's needs and providing tailored support to each participant and at a pace they could manage, taking a holistic intensive approach and providing focused support in helping them making progress towards work

- aiming for high levels of trust with participants, enabling them to build new and more productive relationships and understand the expectations of the world of work.
- Many groups needed to have access to funds to help the individuals buy suitable clothes or equipment for work and pay for certification. Sources of funding for these purposes are few and far between. Accessing such funding is not easy. A single 'pot' of funding available for discretionary grants to participants to support them at key stages in their journey into work would be invaluable.

4 NEXT STAGE

- 4.1 It is important to note that this is not the final assessment of the 11 projects funded since October 2008 as the full potential range of attributable outcomes will continue to emerge over the coming months.
- 4.2 The ESF Global Grants programme between 2006 and March 2008 had access to over 3 times more funding than the current Exeter Positive Steps Fund and provided grants totalling £358,000 to 50 projects at an average of £7,160 per project.
- 4.3 The major change as a result of the reduction in funding available was to reduce the grants to a maximum of £5,000 per project and one impact of this has been a reduction in applications.
- 4.4 Officers have met with Devon Community Foundation and the independent charitable trust who have expressed their interest in trying to establish a longer-term more collaborative and strategic approach to support the Exeter Positive Steps Fund. Such an approach would achieve several different aims:
- build on success and support those groups which are effective and achieve real outcomes for individuals
 - help secure the stability and long-term viability of projects
 - enable organisations to share their experiences, reduce duplication of effort and support one another in development of approaches
 - reduce the complexities and costs of administration in bidding for funds and enable organisations to design and implement effective measurement of impact
 - enable the funding partners to learn directly from those with the necessary expertise on how best to reach and target the SHIP priority geographic areas covered within Exeter for best results and value for the investment made.

Proposal

- 4.5 It is proposed that Officers together with DCF work with the most effective groups that have delivered projects supported by the Positive Steps Fund and establish a small number of collaborative but larger projects that principally support the target client groups from within the SHIP priority areas of the city as referred to in 2.7 above.
- 4.6 Whilst the detail of collaborative arrangements have yet to be established, projects will consist of 5 main building blocks that will help each participant make progress towards work or actually into paid employment. These building blocks are as follows:
- address the critical issues affecting a person's motivation and capacity to work
 - through individual and team activities, develop an individual's interpersonal and intra-personal skills to help them become effective potential employees
 - provide further training in core skills, such as maths, literacy and ICT and assist those with raised aspirations to access further training and skills development to enhance their choice of employment and earning potential

- provide opportunities to individuals so motivated to actively participate in volunteering, which enables them to experience some of the expectations of work, but also gain valuable learning in working on their own and in a team environment
- through a 'job club' assist participants to support one another and also develop practical job search skills with support to help them apply for jobs and participate effectively in interviews for employment.

4.7 Anticipated outputs are based on conservative estimates from performance achieved from previously funded projects and are as follows:

- 305 participants from the target client population per annum, of which:
 - 49 will go into employment
 - 24 will go on to further training and skills development
 - 48 will go on to volunteering

4.8 The anticipated outcomes of collaborative project work are likely to be:

- economies of scale as monitoring and resources are shared between the groups delivering activity
- improved access to the most 'hard to reach' individuals who do not access or trust provision from mainstream services
- the attraction of further financial support for the Exeter Positive Steps Fund from new donors, both corporate and private
- better engagement with local employers to support the employment of people affected by worklessness.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Since September 2008, £106,250 has been available to the Positive Steps Fund; £16,381 remains.

5.2 It is recommended that the City Council allocates a further £62,500 up until March 2011 using budgets available in 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 from the Economy and Tourism Budget for skills development.

5.3 The independent charitable trust has already indicated their willingness to commit at least £30,000 per annum to match the City Council's Funding over this time-frame.

5.4 It will be a target of the new strategic approach to attract further co-funding for the Exeter Positive Steps Fund.

5.5 Forecast initial funding for Exeter Positive Steps is as follows: -

Funder	Amount per annum	Total amount over 2 financial years
Exeter City Council	£31,250	£62,500
Independent local charitable trust	£30,000	£60,000
Positive Steps Fund carried forward		£16,381
Total	£60,250	£138,881

6 RECOMMENDED that:

- 6.1 Members note the report.
- 6.2 Members support and agree to the release of £31,250 from the Economy and Tourism Budget 2009/2010 and from the next financial year to support the Exeter Positive Steps Fund.

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ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

'Global Grants – Exeter Positive Steps', Scrutiny Committee – Economy, 4 September 2008

APPENDIX 1

Progress on projects supported by the Exeter Positive Steps Fund

Applicant	Date Funded	Brief Note	Progress	Target no. of people supported	Actual No.	M	F	Grant awarded	Total Cost
EDP Drug & Alcohol Services	15/10/2008	to offer a 12 month programme of activities including Canoeing, Horse Riding and Photography to people who have or have had problems with drugs	Report received but further statistics requested. Project has been successful in terms of team building and increasing awareness of other forms of activity and interest.	10	10	4	6	£4,992	£5,112
St Petrock's (Exeter) Ltd	15/10/2008	providing homeless people with workshops, help and advice on securing employment	Volunteers provide 1:1 basic accredited skills training in maths literacy and IT. Participants gain a huge amount of motivation, as many of them had not previously achieved a certificate of any kind. The training is not available through LSC/Exeter College as much is at entry level rather than NVQ1 or 2 which is too expensive to provide. Some of the tutors have themselves been street homeless. Participants need considerable support as they have other barriers to learning and progression. Building up this range of skills helps the participants to be better equipped to move on. Target outcomes – 20 into employment, 5 into volunteering, and 70% with improved confidence, motivation, and self-esteem.	40	38	33	5	£3,000	£18,400

Progress on projects supported by the Exeter Positive Steps Fund

Applicant	Date Funded	Brief Note	Progress	Target no. of people supported	Actual No.	M	F	Grant awarded	Total Cost
Ivy Project	15/10/2008	to develop an application, interview and review programme for young unemployed volunteers	Project has progressed well. A carefully designed programme to enable young people to examine their own attributes and skills to find out what type of work they would like to do and to build their confidence and self esteem. They use their volunteering experiences to gain skills and to reflect this back into their CV's and job search. Target – all 10 participants will complete a job application and be able to match their existing skills with vacancies	10	10	5	5	£4,998	£4,998
Magic Carpet	01/05/2009	to work with unemployed people, including those with learning disabilities and mental health issues using creative activities to build confidence.	Some delay in getting project started but now nearly finished at the Phoenix Centre; 9 people have stayed the course; important as it shows that they have been able to commit to the programme. The participants had previously discounted education and most had not gained any certificates. They had a real fear of the educational process, but now see this is within their reach and have completed a portfolio of work which could be assessed. Magic Carpet has successfully bid for a Lottery Grant and will be able to continue their work in this area.	15	13	2	11	£2,645	£2,645
Exeter YMCA	01/05/2009	to start a job club project based in St Davids Hill, Exeter	4 people were street homeless and are now in work. A range of Exeter Groups makes referrals to Exeter YMCA: 15 people have gone into work, 2 into education; 2 into volunteering; 2 into	70	71	29	42	£5,000	£33,904

Progress on projects supported by the Exeter Positive Steps Fund

Applicant	Date Funded	Brief Note	Progress	Target no. of people supported	Actual No.	M	F	Grant awarded	Total Cost
			training. Job coaching is a key part of the service to help people find what they want to do including CV preparation. Exeter YMCA aspire to reach out across Exeter, but need funding to employ another person. Target is at least 65% to improve employability skills and 20 people access paid employment, education or training.						
Refugee Support Group	01/05/2009	to contribute towards the costs of providing increased support to refugee women	<p>18 of the beneficiaries are receiving 1:1 English as a second language tuition in their homes with 12 volunteer tutors.</p> <p>There is a waiting list of both beneficiaries and volunteers who need to be suitably cleared before they can begin work; 7 have already passed their citizenship tests which either requires a written exam or proof of moving up a level in language competency. The Refugee Support Group works closely with Exeter College to ensure adequate levels are attained. The Group is confident that at least 75% of current membership will achieve citizenship. Number of participants has increased from 40 - 66. In addition to language skills the Group encourages integration and tries to break down barriers even within the beneficiaries caused by different languages and cultures. One has become an interpreter and another works as a volunteer in a charity shop.</p>	43	66		66	£5,000	£26,660

Progress on projects supported by the Exeter Positive Steps Fund

Applicant	Date Funded	Brief Note	Progress	Target no. of people supported	Actual No.	M	F	Grant awarded	Total Cost
			Target – all women will have improved their self confidence and self esteem and achieved or be working towards the Citizenship Certificate and/or ESOL qualification.						
Exeter Community Transport Association (CTA)	03/07/2009	to offer unemployed people the opportunity to learn new skills and qualifications en route to a goal of full employment	Protocol Skills provide the training - High take up of people through the NVQ scheme for retail and customer services: 2 have secured jobs. Opportunities for work experience provided by CTA through their charity shop and shop mobility service. Eleven, undertook customer care training and 1 did business and administration. Training and assessment was on a 1:1 basis. Some struggled with written work but when using Dictaphones they felt more confident. Staff also help participants with job search and interview practice. Target: 6 people taking up retail or customer training and 6 people completing CVs and attending interviews.	10	12	10	2	£4,909	£4,909
Ivy Project	03/07/2009	to increase the employability of all young people, regardless of background, through voluntary work and accreditation	Additional funding was required from other funders; which has now been secured and a worker has been employed; the project started this autumn and thus it is too early to evaluate activity. Target 20 people take up volunteering and 15 young people complete community certificate in volunteering.	20	Data to be provided			£4,995	£10,000

Progress on projects supported by the Exeter Positive Steps Fund

Applicant	Date Funded	Brief Note	Progress	Target no. of people supported	Actual No.	M	F	Grant awarded	Total Cost
Turntable Furniture	03/07/2009	to help unemployed people, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, to volunteer thereby providing them with work experience and increased confidence and skills	Participants are referred from St Petrocks, probation, JCP. They learn to relate to other people, work as a team, take responsibility for their actions, punctuality, and control anger. Alcohol dependency is a big problem but through support and development of trust there is a noticeable decline in length of time and frequency of "binges". Target: improved self confidence and ability to work as team member. Two have moved into full employment.	12	13	13		£3,500	£15,880
Peninsula Coaching Foundation	03/07/2009	to provide Personal Development coaching sessions to young people who will be referred by partner organisations, who are not currently in education, employment or training	Project is only half way through so full statistics are not available. Small steps are taken to increase their confidence leading to them taking greater responsibility for themselves. Target: participants will have identified barriers that are preventing them from moving on and will understand the steps to take to move into education, training, or employment. The project is working on confidence, gaining control of their lives.	12	5	2	3	£4,771	£4,771
Exeter Shilhay Community Limited	09/10/2009	people trained to use a digital camera competently and able to take quality photographs for web publication and receiving paid work as a result of the project	The first tranche of training has already taken place with 6 participants; 3 of whom have completed the course. Another course will take place in the New Year. The participants are enthusiastic about the project and are keen to learn the new skills which will enable them to be paid through the contract being set up to take photographs for the Devon Home Choice	14	6 to date	4	2	£5,000	£5,000

Progress on projects supported by the Exeter Positive Steps Fund

Applicant	Date Funded	Brief Note	Progress	Target no. of people supported	Actual No.	M	F	Grant awarded	Total Cost
			Scheme. Target: 6 people trained to a competent level and 3 gaining paid work as a result.						
Total				256	244	102	142	£48,810	£132,279