

one community

News from the Oldham European Partnership

Autumn 2008

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EUROPEAN REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT FUND



Oldham
Partnership

Issue 1
Autumn 2008

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Contact Oldham Partnership

T: 0161 770 5255

info@oldhampartnership.org.uk

www.oldhampartnership.org.uk



Oldham
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European funding past, present and future

Without wanting to sound too wistful, the 2000-2006 North West objective 2 structural fund programme (to give it its full and slightly heavy title) is now drawing to a close. Since become involved in structural fund delivery in Oldham ten years ago, I have seen at first hand the huge benefits and wonderful work that has taken place. This newsletter is a brief celebration of some of the most successful projects that have been supported with European Regional Development Funds (ERDF). It will also give a brief introduction to the new structural fund programme and highlight future opportunities for partnership projects.

The North West operational programme (NWOP) 2007 – 2013

Unlike previous programmes, which have been managed by Government Office North West, the new programme will be managed by the North West Development Agency. The ERDF programme has four priorities and 11 action areas (this doesn't include technical assistance funds). Beneath each action area will sit a more detailed investment framework that will identify the type of activity that could be supported under the ERDF programme, and the types of organisations that are best placed to deliver these projects. Each investment framework has been developed in consultation with local, sub-regional and regional partners and approved by the programme monitoring committee (PMC).

The programme is focused on supporting and enhancing the competitiveness of the region, with a secondary focus on the creation of the right conditions for growth. However, there are relatively limited resources in the programme so it is therefore focused on areas where it can make the biggest impact, in conjunction with other funding for economic development.

In short the NWOP aims to create 26,700 net additional jobs, improve the region's gross value added (GVA) by £1.17 billion and achieve a 25% reduction in additional CO2 emissions generated from programme investments.

Cooperation programmes

There are over 300 potential European Union (EU) funding programmes all with their own requirements and conditions. They cover a huge range of activity that in the past would not have been eligible for structural fund support. Some of the largest programmes cover lifelong learning, youth inclusion and democracy, combating crime, spatial development and culture.

For most of them, the EU or a national coordinating body issues a call for proposals with a deadline by which applications must be submitted. The majority of these programmes require you to work in partnership with colleagues from other member states, (some of the larger programmes don't require a partner). Some are run from the UK, for example UK-based firm ECOTEC coordinates lifelong learning. The EU administers the largest, such as INTERREG, from Lille.

Finally, I want to thank all of those project managers that have worked so hard over the past years. Although the projects have finished, unfortunately the work will not as the EU are increasingly stringent on audits in closing programmes. Can I remind you of the obligations around document retention. We will be sending out more detailed guidance in the near future, but for the time being I will close this programme as we opened it – "Don't even throw away a bus ticket!"

Thanks. Dave Catherall,
Principal European Programme Officer



Transitions

delivering vocational training and education

The Transitions Connect project works with young people from the looked after children's and care leavers' services, TiE (Training into Employment) transitions service, New Bridge Learning Centre and the vulnerable adult service, to develop the young people's skills and experience and to encourage them to think about employment as a real option for their adult life. All disability and socially excluded groups are offered a service.

The project has been a resounding success: 79 young people have been assisted towards employment, 46 have received learning support and 8 have so far gone on to secure a job. A particular highlight has been the empowerment of staff to develop learning packages to meet the needs of learners who find it hard to access existing provision, due to their vulnerability, disability or special learning needs. A Transitions job club and Vulnerable Adults job club have also been set up to provide support.

Behind the scenes, the project looked to develop and formalise partnerships between service providers – and indeed partnerships have been put in place involving Jobcentre Plus, Connexions, the Learning and Skills Council, OPAL (a group supporting people with learning difficulties in the borough) and many more.



Elizabeth's story

Elizabeth originally intended to undertake the independent living course at Oldham College after leaving school. However, after a successful work experience placement in a local café and attending the Transitions job club, she has now moved onto the Training into Employment scheme. Elizabeth will start a training programme at the same café with a view to future employment with them, and will work closely with an employment mentor during this period. Elizabeth's mum says this has given her daughter a whole new outlook on what she can do when she leaves school.



What we learnt

Firstly, being imaginative with the funding was essential, because the work crosses many of the traditional boundaries of public sector services. The Transitions team also forged strong partnerships with the local school/learning centre, Connexions, children's and adults' social services, employers, the local college and above all with children and young people and their parents. These partnerships have been formalised and written agreements put in place. This has been beneficial in ensuring everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities.

The support and mentoring aspect of the programme has been a key aspect of its success – and importantly the support given is highly flexible. Both employers and parents are very positive about the degree of support offered to the young people.



Pedal power to Oldham

Thanks to ERDF, Oldham residents and workers can enjoy a more pleasant bicycle commute into the town centre and do their bit for a greener Oldham and their own health!

Over the last five years, a grant of £500,000 has funded a number of improvements for cyclists along key routes to the town centre. The enhancements are part of the Oldham cycle network, a 25-year £30m master plan for getting more people regularly cycling in the borough, both for commuting and leisure purposes.

The ERDF grant enabled delivery of this network to happen quicker than it would otherwise and began to establish a number of key traffic free cycle routes right into the heart of the town centre.

But the project has had a far wider impact than just the establishment of cycle routes. It has supported other cycling initiatives and businesses and organisations across the borough. This includes

- the Primary Care Trust's health programmes
- travel plans for Oldham Council, Oldham's two colleges, university and other businesses based in the town centre
- cycling to school initiatives
- the borough's independent cycle shops
- cycle tourism, including National Cycle Network routes

Oldham's New Deal for Communities (NDC) programme and the Local Transport Plan (LTP) capital programme have matched the ERDF grant contribution for this project.

Unlocking Oldham's cycling and walking potential

The ERDF investment means that cycling is now a much more appealing and accessible option for a lot more people in Oldham. Monitoring devices were recently installed so that we can measure exactly how many cyclists are benefitting from the improvements made to the flagship cycle routes. The Glodwick Road and Park Road schemes show how the local area has also been completely transformed to make it more attractive for walking and cycling.

Image 1 Intimidating environment with no access on to Glodwick Road

Image 2 The subway was filled in and replaced by a toucan crossing



Image 3 linear park route overgrown and inaccessible to pedestrians as well as cyclists.

Image 4 After the improvements



Drive

direct routes into volunteering and employment

DRIVE is similar to the Transitions project but helps disabled and vulnerable adults between 16 and 60 to find employment and to stay in employment. In 2007-2008, the project helped 146 people towards employment and provided learning support for 125 people. 44 people began working as a result of their involvement in the scheme.

Success story

MF was a student at one of Oldham's statemented schools and via the programme, gained full time employment with Tesco at Failsworth. Twelve months on and MF has made wonderful progress in all aspects of his job, but most notably in his self-confidence and assertiveness.

DRIVE works closely with a wide variety of partners, including:

- Access 4 All group (who give advice on physical access)
- Connexions
- Various council departments like education and social services
- Jobcentre Plus
- Oldham Community Leisure

Through the project, we learnt that an approach that focuses on a person's individual needs is essential – and that excellent outcomes are attained through hard work, positivity and seizing opportunities.

The changing face of funding in Oldham

This year marks a major departure for the way national government funding comes into Oldham – and also big changes in how we decide to spend it. This is a brand new way of doing things, but will bring huge benefits to the borough. Here are some of the terms you will hear:

Local area agreements (LAA)

The Oldham Partnership – our local strategic partnership – recently produced the borough's second local area agreement.

The LAA lays out the borough's priorities for the next three years, and the targets that the Oldham Partnership will work towards. The LAA is the delivery plan that will help us towards our vision for Oldham in 2020, as outlined in the partnership's other key document, the sustainable community strategy.

LAAs are a new way of working because they are local plans that are driven by local priorities. They are the only place where local authorities will agree targets delivered by the authority or in partnership, so will get rid of lots of the confusing bureaucracy that has existed in local government for many years.

You can read our LAA at www.oldhampartnership.org.uk/oldham_community_strategy_and_laa_final.pdf

The area-based grant (ABG)

Alongside this, this year Oldham received a fund called the area based grant. This is a combination of what were previously many different funds provided through different government departments – a system which led to relatively uncoordinated service delivery, and was an expensive and inefficient way of providing services.

The ABG – and indeed other money that comes into Oldham, such as our European funds – will be used to deliver the shared set of priorities that are set out in the LAA. This means we know that we're putting the full weight of our funds towards tackling the borough's most important issues, and the issues, which dealt with successfully will make the most difference to people's lives.

Oldham Partnership commissioning unit

The commissioning unit are part of Oldham Partnership support team.

The Oldham Partnership itself doesn't provide services and activity but will be responsible for undertaking the commissioning and performance management of



activity to achieve the strategic objectives for Oldham. The commissioning unit supports the partnership in this role. A partnership commissioning framework is in development to outline the process and ensure all partners have a shared understanding of commissioning.

To find out more, contact the partnership's commissioning manager, Alison Vaughan on 0161 770 3199 or Alison.Vaughan@oldham.gov.uk. You can find out more about the Oldham Partnership at www.oldhampartnership.org.uk.

Shaping the industrial and commercial future of Oldham

The Oldham economic partnership project was born in 2003. The project contributes to improving the borough's economy and enabling local businesses to play a key role in shaping the economic future of the borough and thus increase their own sustainability.

More specifically, the project includes the coordination of an economic partnership, research into the borough's economy, liaison with employers and pilot events and activities in this sector. Of these, the main aim was to establish the economic partnership, with the following objectives:

- 1 to enhance the borough's competitiveness by investing in business development and support services**
- 2 to promote Oldham as a place to live, learn, work and play**
- 3 to encourage inward investment, create new jobs and businesses and improve the competitiveness of existing businesses**
- 4 to increase the engagement and contribution of the private sector locally and nationally in the regeneration and civic activity of the borough**
- 5 to improve access to and equality of employment opportunities**
- 6 to build sustainable communities by harnessing the resources and expertise of local people and putting them at the heart of our activities**
- 7 to conserve and improve the built and natural environment to create access areas where people choose to live, learn, work and play.**

In 2005, the partnership commissioned an economic assessment of the borough to analyse the local economy, the needs of local employers and the state of the labour market. The results of this assessment provided evidence for the Oldham Economic Strategy.

Some project highlights 2004-06

- Establishing an economic partnership, which currently has 20 private sector members
- A new economic strategy for Oldham
- Delivery plans for enterprise, innovation and growth; skills and workforce development and image and investment
- A pilot Working 4 Yourself event which attracted 250 attendees for people wanting to set up a business or grow their existing business
- A pilot home working project that supported 25 people towards work
- Support for 15 small and medium enterprises via the Asian Business Association
- Various events and seminars for employers

...and 2006-08

- Establishing an economy and enterprise board, various sub-groups of this board and an economy and enterprise unit within the council to support the board
- An annual business survey
- Developing and managing business start-up and business growth programmes for Oldham
- Oldham residents and businesses supported to take

part in the national 'striking out' entrepreneurship competition

- Participating in the Stars awards for entrepreneurs

Case study: Winning Pitch business accelerator programme

The business accelerator programme, delivered on behalf of the project by Winning Pitch, has been a major success. The programme is open to local businesses and aims to develop them into high performing entrepreneurial organisations. It involves three workshops and one-to-one support resulting in a one-page action plan for the next twelve months. Companies participating in the project also benefit from Winning Pitch's Pathfinder guide – known as the definitive rules for achieving business growth and breakthrough performance.

The results have been superb. 20 small and medium enterprises have been assisted, and together, they forecast a £35m sales increase. The owners and management teams report feeling energised and focused.

"The thing I took away from this apart from a contract with a major supermarket – was a very structured and clear plan in my own mind about how to take the business forward over the next five years."

David Braithwaite, Prewett's Health Foods Ltd

To find out more about the Oldham economic partnership, contact june.smith@oldham.gov.uk or louise.slater@oldham.gov.uk or T: 0161 770 1671

Highway to Opportunity (H2O)

The Highway to Opportunity (H2O) intensive employment project provides personalised support to help residents achieve their employment goals.

The project is open to residents from the borough's most deprived areas - Hollinwood, Coldhurst, Werneth, St Mary's, Lees, Alexandra and Medlock Vale - who want to find their first job, re-enter the world of work after a period of unemployment or are in a low paid, low skilled job and want to move up the career ladder.

The process begins with a one to one meeting to discuss the customer's needs and aspirations. This provides the basis for an individual action plan which is agreed with the client to help them work towards their

end goal. Clients can access a whole range of services, including supported voluntary placements, qualifications and references, short training courses, intensive job search support including job search techniques, CV and application form preparation and interview techniques.

To date, 294 residents have been assisted towards finding employment, 80 are in employment, 258 have been provided with learning support, 204 clients have been helped into training and 63 have achieved qualifications.

The project's central base is in Oldham town centre but there are also offices in local areas. The H2O service is provided in St Chad's centre, Hollinwood; Coppice community centre, Werneth; Glodwick resource centre, Glodwick; Groundwork's offices in Higinshaw and two specially converted buses. In particular, the Asian Women's Bus brings job search and training help right into the heart of the community.

Stuart's story

Stuart was in the army for 12 years and then worked in a semi skilled occupation for ten years. He came to H2O wanting a complete change of career. He has six godchildren and always enjoyed interacting with children and helping them to read, write and play, so this was identified as a potential career path.

After advice from Karen Ashley from H2O in St Chad's centre Stuart started volunteering at the centre and began an NVQ in childcare. He enjoyed the volunteering and became a real asset to the centre. Six months later, Stuart finished working at the factory and began working part time in a children's centre, allowing him to continue volunteering and studying.

Stuart is enjoying his new and challenging role and looking forward to gaining full time employment in childcare.



We look forward to receiving your comments and feedback.

Contact Oldham Partnership
Oldham Business Centre, Cromwell
Street, Oldham, OL1 1BB

T. 0161 770 5255
info@oldhampartnership.org.uk
www.oldhampartnership.org.uk

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All information correct at time of going to press.
Published October 2008.



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