



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019-20

**FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

4th November 2019

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC
HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY
SERVICES**

Agenda Item No.

**EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY AND
ACTION PLAN 2019-21**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the proposed Rhondda Cynon Taf Employment and Skills Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2021.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Scrutinise the Council's Employment Strategy and Action Plan 2019-21; and
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report.

3. BACKGROUND – WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY?

- 3.1 Developing a strategy for skills and employment is important for several reasons. It will:
- Focus limited resources and support on those most in need so that they can improve their own and their families' futures;
 - Consolidate the link between learning/training provision and local and regional labour market needs;

- Ensure that Council services and partners are clear about the direction of travel and the outcomes that we will be working to achieve;
 - Identify any gaps in provision so that they can be addressed;
 - Help us to jointly prepare for the introduction of new national initiatives and the ending of some current funding sources so that there is a smooth transition for the benefit of communities and individuals.
- 3.2 Local data indicates that there remains a need to improve skills and qualifications and increase employability.
- 3.3 Employability is defined as the combination of factors and processes that enable people to progress towards or get into employment, to stay in employment and progress in the workplace.
- 3.4 Increasing employability is essential to improving prosperity and reducing inequality. People are less likely to live in poverty if they are in employment and if they can sustain and progress in employment. There is evidence to suggest that even short-term unemployment can have a significant long-term impact on an individual's financial security and wellbeing.
- 3.5 Worklessness is the short-hand term used to refer to people who are currently out of work and looking for employment as well as people who are claiming benefits and who are economically inactive and may not be in a position to look for work.
- 3.6 People who fall into the economically inactive category include:
- Students;
 - Retired people;
 - People looking after a home or family;
 - People who suffer from long-term sickness;
 - People who are temporarily sick;
 - People who are 'discouraged'.
- 3.7 The rate of economic inactivity for people aged 16 – 64 years has reduced steadily over the last 3 years and currently stands at 35,200 which is only 0.3% higher than the percentage for Wales. Compared to the previous year there has been a reduction in the number of students (from 8,500 to 7,800); the number of people looking after a home/family (from 7,300 to 5,100); and a slight reduction in the number of long-term sick (from 13,500 to 12,100) who are claiming benefits.
- 3.8 It is notable however that fewer people who are currently economically inactive identified they wanted a job in 2018/19 than in 2017/18 (6,500 compared to 10,800). It is not clear why this is the case.
- 3.9 The annual unemployment figures (that is, people who are registered as actively looking for work) has seen a slight increase during the past 3 financial years with the figure for April 2018 - March 2019 indicating 6,800 people had been unemployed and looking for work. The claimant count in July 2019 was 4,385 which is 2.9% of the working age population. This is consistent with the percentage for Wales. The rate of unemployment in the age range that is higher than the comparative data for Wales is that for young

people aged 18-24 years and specifically 18-21 years where the percentage difference is 1.1%. (NOMIS)

- 3.10 Skills and qualifications are an important determinant of a person's ability to gain and sustain employment. The most recent data (January-December 2018) indicates that 16,100 people in Rhondda Cynon Taf aged 16 – 64 years have no qualifications. This amounts to 10.8% of the working age population compared with 8.6% for Wales. (NOMIS) It is important to address this issue as well as to ensure that there are pathways for people who have lower level qualifications to enhance their qualification level and progress to higher level learning.
- 3.11 The changing nature of employment requires people to be flexible and to develop skills and qualifications throughout their life-times if they are to remain in work and progress in employment. It is important therefore that training and advice providers have a good understanding of labour market needs and provision in their areas and that relevant learning/training programmes are developed to ensure that individuals gain the skills and qualifications they need to fill those vacancies. Similarly there needs to be a synergy between employment support programmes and learning programmes if limited resources are to be used to maximum effect.

4. CURRENT SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES

- 4.1 Our aim is to work with partners to provide a joined up approach that will ensure that there is access to relevant learning and training programmes that reflect the needs of employers and effective employment and advice services to support individuals to gain, stay and progress in work.
- 4.2 Rhondda Cynon Taf's Employment Pathway has been designed in collaboration with training provider partners (Appendix 1). This is a strategic approach that ensures that services and organisations work together to ensure that people have the opportunity to access the learning and skills required to improve their employability, alongside the mentoring and employment support to gain and sustain paid employment. This has had a positive impact on provision and ensured that limited resources have been used to maximum effect. The current range of skills and employment support programmes delivered by the Council are outlined in Appendix 2.
- 4.3 In 2018 a Strategic Employment Group was established with representatives from the following organisations:
- RCT Community Services;
 - RCT Education, Employment, and Training;
 - RCT Regeneration and Prosperity;
 - RCT Youth Engagement and Participation Service;
 - RCT 21st century schools;
 - Coleg y Cymoedd;
 - Department of Work and Pensions;
 - Careers Wales;
 - Trivallis;
 - Rhondda Housing Association;
 - Newydd Housing Association;

- Hafod Housing Association;
- Rhondda Housing Association;
- Cynon Taf Housing Association;
- Prime Cymru;
- Adult Community Learning Partnership;
- Citizens Advice Bureau.

The purpose of the group is to ensure that we work together to map provision, share information on new initiatives and good practice as well as to explore opportunities to apply for additional funding when available

- 4.4 All these organisations have, at their core, a commitment to provide the best learning, advice and employment support for their customers. This common commitment will be of vital importance in the coming years as ESF funding which supports a significant amount of skills and employment support ends.
- 4.5 The proposed Employment and Skills Strategy has been developed in consultation with this group.

5. EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS STRATEGY 2019-21

- 5.1 The Strategy has been guided by themes identified by the Welsh Government in their strategic documents and also informed by regional priorities as identified by the Regional Skills Partnership and Cardiff City Deal developments. The strategic priorities contribute to the Council's 3 themes of Prosperity, People and Place as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2016-20.
- 5.2 The Strategy (Appendix 3) proposes the following vision:

We want to live in a community where:

- All people have access to the support they need to develop their skills and knowledge so that they can achieve their potential and live healthy and rewarding lives;
- Everyone who wants to work is supported to gain and stay in employment;
- Those who want to progress in work are able to benefit from opportunities to further develop their skills and gain promotion;
- There is access to training and learning throughout a person's life as a commitment to lifelong learning is essential for prosperity.

- 5.3 The aim is to achieve the following outcomes:

- There will be an improvement in the self-esteem and confidence of customers who engage with our programmes;
- An improvement in the health and well-being of people participating in learning programmes;
- An increase in individual skills and qualification so that the percentage of people with no qualifications in Rhondda Cynon Taf will be lower than the average for Wales;
- Training programmes offered will be relevant to the skills needs identified by employers;

- More volunteering options will be available;
- More people will benefit from good quality work experience opportunities;
- More in-work support will be available to people once they have entered employment;
- Customer satisfaction with the level of support offered will be increased;
- More opportunities will be available for people who have a disability or a long-term health condition to re-enter, gain or sustain employment.

6. THE EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS ACTION PLAN

- 6.1 This proposed plan outlines activities that will be delivered in order to meet the priorities highlighted in the strategy and achieve the required outcomes. It can be seen at Appendix 4.
- 6.2 It is recognised that this action plan will need to be flexible as developments in relation to skills and training at a national level will be introduced over the next two years which may require significant re-modelling of provision. This includes the implementation of Job Support Wales, the creation of a national strategic body for adult community learning and the ending of ESF programmes as a result of Brexit.
- 6.3 The action plan will be regularly monitored by the Strategic Employment Group and reports on progress can be provided to Members as required.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This strategy and action plan is designed to ensure equal access to learning and employment support and to reduce the barriers to employment and personal development. There is an emphasis on supporting more people with disabilities and long term health conditions to re-enter or sustain work as this is an area of concern at a Wales wide level.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Training and advice provider partners who sit on the Strategic Employment Group have been consulted on the proposed strategy and action plan. Representatives of Learning Disability service users and their carers have also been consulted due to their expert knowledge of the barriers experienced by people with learning disabilities in relation to learning and employment.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report. The strategy and action plan are designed to ensure best use of current and future resources.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 There are no legal implications aligned to this report. There is no statutory requirement for Local Authorities to deliver adult community learning. However, S.22 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 requires Local Authorities to ensure there are sufficient facilities within their area for part-time adult learning provision.

11. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 11.1 The strategy and action plan link clearly to the three main themes of the Council's Corporate Plan with its emphasis on prosperity, people and place. Developing skills and gaining and sustaining employment is the main way in which people can improve their own prosperity and enhance their health and wellbeing, while the level of employment in an area has an impact on the whole community.
- 11.2 A significant number of organisations have been involved in the development of the strategy and action plan which will require collaborative action to achieve the outcomes identified. It is likely to result in a further integration of programmes over the longer-term as funding sources and contractual obligations are changed in response to national developments. Ensuring meaningful programmes to support the development of skills and enable people to gain employment and stay in employment will improve the lives of individuals and their families preventing them from falling into poverty or helping them to rise out of poverty.
- 11.3 This report relates to the following Wellbeing goals:
- A prosperous Wales – improving learning and skills and supporting people into employment will reduce the level of poverty in the County;
 - A more equal Wales – the strategy ensures that people of all backgrounds and abilities have an equal chance to access the learning and support they need;
 - A healthier Wales – ensuring access to learning and employment is recognised as having a positive impact on health and well-being;
 - A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language – there is a commitment to provide learning and improve confidence through offering access to provision in the medium of Welsh and also using arts as a vehicle to improve employability.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 As indicated in the report, there are significant reasons why a strategy and action plan for Employment and Skills is required at this time. The vision, priorities and outcomes included in the strategy have been agreed by the Strategic Employment Group subject to feedback from Scrutiny. The action plan indicates the actions that Council services will implement to contribute to the achievement of the plan.
- 12.2 Scrutiny of the strategy and action plan will be welcomed and any recommendations made will be implemented prior to the documents being submitted to Cabinet for approval in December.

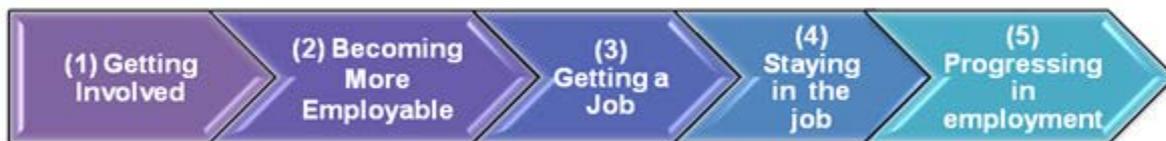
Rhondda Cynon Taf's Employment Pathway aims to provide equitable access to employment support and opportunities that align to emerging local labour market needs and employers.

Partners have worked together to develop a streamlined, strategic approach that ensures services and organisations work collaboratively to provide sufficient and appropriate support, training and guidance, to enable people to gain and sustain paid employment of their choosing.

The Employment Pathway has recently been updated to reflect Welsh Government's modelling.

There are five phases to the WG and RCT Employment Pathway for adults and young people.

Entry can be at any Stage/Tier determined by the needs of the person.



Stage/Tier One – Getting Involved

Those who are furthest from the labour market e.g.

- Not yet ready to work
- Not interested in working
- Need support to engage with employability and skills provision.

Stage/Tier Two – Becoming More Employable

Those who need support to increase personal, technical and transferable skills and experience relevant to work e.g.

- Those with no or low skills
- Those with little relevant and/or current quotable experience

Stage/Tier Three – Getting a Job

Those who need limited support to take the final steps to secure fair work e.g.

- People who have only recently become workless
- Those with single or simple barriers

Stage/Tier Four – Staying in the Job

Appendix 1 Rhondda Cynon Taf's Employment Pathway

Those who are at risk of disengaging from work and those more sensitive to labour force changes; those more likely to be in or at risk of in-work poverty e.g:

- those recently employed following support.
- low or unskilled and low paid
- underemployed, zero hour contracts holders, those working in the gig economy and those affected by welfare reform e.g. UC
- employed people with significant dependent care needs or work limiting health conditions etc

Stage/Tier Five – Progressing in Employment

Those who are relatively secure in work but who are unlikely to progress e.g.

- low skilled workers unable to access training opportunities without additional support
- workers, however highly skilled, whose skills do not match with their current job or industry
- those working in a declining industry or occupational sector.

Appendix 2 – Learning and Skills Programmes delivered by Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

A wide range of programmes are delivered by Council services to support people who have left full-time education. These include programmes designed to improve skills or support well-being as well as programmes that are specifically focussed on supporting people into work. These are delivered by:

- the Adult Education Service,
- Communities for Work/Communities for Work +;
- Education, Employment and Training service;
- the Youth Engagement and Participation Service;
- Organisational Development (HR)

Adult Education Service

The Council's Adult Education Service delivers adult community learning programmes in Rhondda Cynon Taf and is the Lead Body for the Adult Community Learning Partnership in the county. The service provides support, in the main to people over the age of 25.

The service has one lifelong learning centre at Garth Olwg that facilitates a wide range of provision delivered by Council services and other partners including courses, workshops, events and theatre performances.

The majority of courses and programmes are delivered at libraries, community centres and other venues across the county. In 2017/18 learning was delivered at 96 venues.

Provision is targeted at those who are most disadvantaged and would benefit from gaining skills and qualifications although there is also a programme of activities designed to enhance the well-being of participants and to support the social integration and independence of older residents or those who have a life-limiting health condition.

The service's **pre- employment programme** is funded by the Community Learning Grant and runs as either a 2 or 4 week programme delivering a number of accredited courses through either Agored Cymru or Quasafe. The programme is built around the specific needs of the learners on each course and individuals can choose from a suite of qualifications including resilience skills, creating the right image, telephone skills, job interview skills, team working to name a few. If successful, learners can then progress onto the more sector specific Employment Routes provision or may decide to focus on developing a particular skill further.

The service provides a range of **digital skills** courses, from basic Introduction to Computing to ECDL courses. A 4 week programme delivered for Communities for Work+ to further develop the skills of people who have engaged with Digital Fridays provision has been particularly successful and a clear progression pathway has been developed in partnership with Communities for Work+ and Adult Learning Wales for learners who wish to enhance their digital skills further.

The focus on ensuring that learning meets local needs has also ensured that services work closely with local employers. The **Employment Routes** programme developed by the service has been successful in developing training programmes with employers who have vacancies and ensuring that learners who successfully complete the training and gain the relevant qualifications are assured of an interview. 46 businesses have engaged with the service and contributed to the development of the programme. These include both local and national companies.

Essential skills courses are funded through an agreement with Coleg y Cymoedd. They are set up for the year but learners can join at any time. They are open to anyone over the age of 16 who has a literacy and/or numeracy skills need. Learners are able to attend more than one class a week. All learners are assessed using the Welsh Government's Essential Skills Toolkit (WEST) or a paper-based assessment. Their needs are identified from the assessment and a relevant Agored Cymru qualification is selected for them to work towards. Individual support is provided by the tutor. Classes have learners of varying levels of need and, consequently a maximum of 10 learners are enrolled on each course. The majority of classes are held at libraries, job centres and community venues. Specific provision is provided for:

- Carers
- people who need to achieve a Level 2 qualification so that they can enrol on Employment Routes provision (some employers, for example the NHS require employees to have this as a minimum qualification);
- people who work in Vision Products
- people with mental health conditions

The **Independent Learning Skills** programme, funded through an agreement with Coleg y Cymoedd, provides opportunities for people with moderate or severe learning disabilities to achieve a 3 - credit qualification. The courses are held at a variety of venues over two terms and 122 learners are currently engaged on a varied curriculum. The majority of learners arrive at the centres by buses provided by the Adult Services team and carers attend with them. This provision is valued highly by the learners themselves, their families and the Day Centre staff who support the provision. It provides an opportunity for learners to gain confidence, raise their self-esteem and meet new people as well as learn new skills.

Inspire 2 Work is an ESF Priority 3 programme that offers a supported Employment Pathway to young people aged 16-24 years living in Rhondda Cynon Taf, providing guidance and training to strengthen the position of young people seeking employment in line with Welsh Government's Youth Engagement and Progression Framework guidelines, and Supporting Engagement in Education, Employment and Training Strategy. The project is focussed on young people with low aspirations, no or low qualifications, those who have difficulty in engaging or participating and who lack awareness of the services that are available to meet their support needs.

To date the project has engaged with 413 young people, 71 of whom have entered employment, 202 have gained qualifications (with some currently going through the accreditation process) and 28 have gone on to further training and education. The funding for this project ends in December 2020.

The service works closely with a wide range of organisations to develop provision that supports the Council's **well-being** agenda. Examples of this work include:

- provision of workshops for the Carer's project such as social media, sugar-craft and sign language;
- collaboration with the Hapi project on 'All about me' – provision for people diagnosed with the early stages of dementia and their family members;
- provision of courses prescribed by Cwm Taf Health Board and the Parc Canol surgery for patients with low level depression and anxiety;
- leisure/hobby-based courses designed to enable people to pursue their interests – of particular relevance to people who are no longer working whether that is due to retirement, ill-health or other reasons

- Chatty café, Knit and Knatter and Age-friendly dancing cater for people of all ages who have common interests

Welsh-medium provision is facilitated and contributes to the achievement of the Council's Strategy and Action Plan for the Promotion and Facilitation of the Welsh Language including a weekly Ti a Fi provision for parents and carers of babies and toddlers and Cymraeg i Blant at Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre. Welsh-medium courses and pathways for learners from Welsh language classes on to other courses delivered in the medium of Welsh are facilitated and jointly planned with key partners.

Of particular note in respect of **Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre** is that it hosts the activities of 63 community groups and organisations and provides access to a wide range of advice, information and guidance not just learning opportunities to residents.

Communities for Work (CfW)

This programme is delivered in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions.

The focus of the CfW programme is to help those furthest away from the labour market in to employment, education or training, or to move closer to the labour market.

Priority 1 of the CfW Programme focuses on the provision of mentoring support, access to qualifications, work experience, and volunteering opportunities for adults over the age of 25 who are long term unemployed and economically inactive living in Communities First areas with a view to helping them to secure employment.

Priority 3 of the CfW Programme provides young people aged 16-24 including those who are Not in Education, Employment or Training, living in Communities First areas, with mentoring support to access Education, Employment or Training.

The majority of training is accessed through ACT, the preferred supplier for training provision identified by Welsh Government.

Up to August 2019 the following outcomes have been achieved for adults:

- 1,084 participants engaged
- 120 job entries
- 633 qualifications gained
- 164 increasing employment

Outcomes for the youth provision by August 2019 is as follows:

- 870 engagements
- 166 job entries
- 326 qualifications gained
- 55 entered edycartin/training

Communities for Work +

CfW+ has been designed to be wraparound support service for Communities for Work, and other European Social Fund (ESF) projects, where people are not eligible for support. This replaced the previous Communities First programme. It consists of two new grant funded programmes namely the CfW+ employment support programme and Legacy fund.

CfW+ offers support to all residents in RCT who are looking to get into employment, training or volunteering.

CfW+ is also able to offer in-work support to those we support into work or those clients on low incomes who are looking to retrain or upskill.

The programme is available across the whole of RCT.

We focus work with Adults 25+ who are ineligible for support through ESF grant funded programmes. Young people aged 16-24 are also able to access support if there is no other suitable provision available from other services or ESF grant funded programmes.

The Legacy fund supports projects that have been identified as best practice and meet local priorities. The Council made the decision to utilise the Legacy fund to:

- support voluntary sector partners that previously delivered projects under the Communities First programme that achieved good outcomes to ensure the continuation of good practice delivery;
- commission core offer activities where good outcomes have been achieved.

The collective CfW+ & Legacy programmes deliver on three key elements:-

- **Local Engagement** - These activities are based upon local need & getting people involved. Our Engagement teams organise a number of local activities and events including well-being coffee mornings, day courses, confidence building sessions & support groups.
- **Core Activities** - These include Work Clubs, Digital Fridays, RCT Leisure, Essential Skills (Maths, English, IT), Adult Learning Courses. We commission RCT Adult Education to deliver the Employment Routes programme.
- **1:1 Mentoring** - Our Employment Mentors support people, through 1:1 tailored sessions, to gain qualifications, find work placements & secure employment.

Outcomes achieved during 2018/19

- 3,939 people registered with CfW+ and Legacy programmes
- 714 people received 1:1 employment mentoring
- 393 people gained employment
- 216 people improved their basic IT skills
- 767 people gained a total of 1,370 qualifications
- 144 people entered a work placement
- 82 people enrolled on In-Work support, of which 86.5% either sustained employment or increased their working hours

Other Legacy outcomes achieved with family and youth engagement programmes:

- 904 people improved mental well-being
- 57 increased physical activity through RCT Leisure

- 428 know how to access help & support
- 364 feel more a part of their community
- 492 foodbank vouchers were issued to 272 individuals

Education, Employment and Training Service (HR)

This service is located within the Council's Human Resources department and leads on the management and provision of a range programmes for the Council as follows:

Apprenticeship Scheme - The Council's Apprenticeship Scheme has been running since September 2012. During that time, over 180 Apprentices have been employed across the Council in many different service areas. The Scheme is open to anyone from the age of 16. There is no upper age limit. Apprenticeships with RCT Council are fixed for two years and paid at National Minimum Wage, depending on age.

Graduate Scheme - Each of the graduate schemes offer a unique opportunity to learn new skills, develop professionally and start a career in community-based public service. Graduates will:

- Earn £26,317 per year on a 37-hour contract
- Complete a range of fully-funded professional qualifications
- Undergo mentoring with a senior member of staff
- Be entitled to participate in a wide-range of staff benefit schemes All successful applicants will be enrolled on a Project Management Level 4 qualification, which will include day release for University attendance

Work experience - Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's work experience programme enables people to carry out and/or observe a range of tasks or duties as an employee, but with the emphasis on learning. Anyone can apply for a work placement with the Council. RCT Council work with School, College and University students, as well as non-students, to support and source work placements. European work placements and University internships are also facilitated.

Care2Work - The Care2Work programme provides children looked after, young people with care and support needs and care leavers with encouragement and support to identify and access a range of training and employment opportunities.

Step in the right direction - this offers two year paid traineeships for children looked after and care leavers aged 16-25. It develops their skills, knowledge and provides work experience in the Council.

Careers and The World of Work – working within Secondary, SEN and Primary schools in RCT, providing advice and information on further education and employment related opportunities. Provide a number of workshops and information sessions to increase awareness and explore opportunities available to them to develop the skills they need to decide upon and implement their career paths.

Career Fairs – The EET Team arrange two career fairs a year within RCT. Working with partners/employers and key stakeholders.

Gateway to Employment – The EET team in partnership with Coleg y Cymoedd is currently working with 8 learners with additional learning and physical needs and arranging suitable

placements within the Council for one year to increase employability skills and sustainable employment.

Organisational Development (HR)

Building Resilience, Prosperity, and Wellbeing in RCT is an ESF Priority 1 project that offers SME's within the Rhondda, Cynon Taf Local Authority area an opportunity to pay particular attention to staff absence and the organisational responses, and the support available to meet the wellbeing and health of their workforce.

The project is focussed on employed; including self-employed, who are absent from work, with a work limiting health condition or disability, who wish to return to work.

The Project will provide support to:

- **278** Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises within Rhondda, Cynon Taf.
- **2,625** individual participants.

Of these, 20% (580) would be Local Authority employees, 80% (2,323) supported from the Private Sector/SME's.

Specifically developed to provide support to SME's and Individuals, to make the necessary arrangements to enable participants to return to work as quickly as possible, including, but not restricted to:

- Specialist HR support to develop or improve wellbeing, equality and diversity policies and strategies.
- Training for Managers/Employers
- Access to physiotherapists, occupational health nurses, counselling and coaching.

The Project delivery commenced in May 2019, with an expected funding end date in April 2022.

Draft RCT Skills and Employment Strategy 2019-22 – Developing skills for success

Context

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council delivers a wide range of programmes and courses to support the development of skills and improve employability of people aged 16 and over. The provision is delivered across a number of services including the Youth Engagement and Participation Service, Community Services, Education, Employment and Training service.

The Council's employment and skills programmes support the Council's corporate strategies and contribute to strategic priorities as identified in the Council's Corporate Plan – The Way Ahead 2016-20:

- Prosperity – building a strong economy
- People – promoting independence and positive lives for everyone
- Place – creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work

This strategy is has been guided by themes identified by the Welsh Government in their strategic documents including Prosperity for All: Economic Action Plan, the 2018 Employability Plan and Adult Community Learning policy. It has also been informed by regional priorities identified by the Regional Skills Partnership and Cardiff City Deal developments.

Where are we now?

Population profile

Rhondda Cynon Taf's resident population is 240,100, of which 19% are under the age of 16. The ONS census data indicated that 97.1% of residents speak English or Welsh. There has been an increase of almost 3% since 2011 in the number of people who identify that they can speak Welsh bringing the figure up tot 15% of the local population. Only 1% of the population indentify themselves with an ethnicity other than White British, Welsh, English or Scots.

The working age population of the county (16-64 years) is 149,300, of which 73,700 are male and 75,600 are female.

116,700 (76.4%) of the working age population are economically active. In terms of occupations:

- 39.1% of the workforce are in managerial/professional roles;
- 19.9% in administrative/skilled trades;
- 20.3% in caring/leisure and service occupations; and
- 20.7% in process/plant and elementary occupations

In terms of job by industry the highest proportion of workers are in Human Health and Social Work activities (19.2%), Wholesale and Retail (15.1%), Education (13.7%) and Manufacturing (13.7%).

The level of jobs per resident aged 16-64 (job density) is 0.56.

Self employment attracts far more males than females. Data for March 2019 indicates that 7,300 men and 2,900 women were self-employed.

There remains a significant gap in the full-time salaries of male and female residents with the hourly rate for male full-time workers being £13.54 compared to the hourly rate for full-time female workers of £11.70.

The total claimant count for out-of-work benefits in July 2019 was 4,835. The table below indicates the distribution across age groups:

Age	Number
16-17 year	15
18-24 years	1,050
25-49 years	2,370
50+	950

35,200 people are economically inactive, of whom 12,100 are affected by long-term sickness. On a positive note, 6,500 people who are economically inactive have identified that they want a job.

The number of workless households (that is households that contain at least one person aged 16 – 64 where no one aged 16 or over is in employment) is 16,500. While worklessness can be an indication of poverty, it should be noted that recent research has indicated that 55% of people in poverty are in working households, with in-work poverty more common for younger workers and those who work part-time or who are self-employed.

Skills play an important part in determining employment rates and employment rates decline with lower levels of qualifications. People with no qualifications are among the most disadvantaged. 10.8% of working age adults (16,100) in Rhondda Cynon Taf have no qualifications (December 2018) as compared to the Wales comparator of 8.6%. However, 70.6% of the working age population have qualifications at NVQ Level 2+ while 31.2% have qualifications at NVQ Level 4+.

The factors outlined above will have an impact on the type and range of provision being offered to support individuals to gain skills and qualifications as well as the employment advice and support provided to help them into work and support them to stay in work.

Business

In 2018 there were 6,490 enterprises in Rhondda Cynon Taf, of which 90.4% were micro-sized employing 0 – 9 employees. This is a higher percentage of micro-sized businesses than the comparator for Wales (89.1%).

The rate of VAT/PAYE enterprise births remained relatively constant between 2002 and 2012 hovering around the 500 mark. However, a substantial growth can be seen in 2016 and 2017 with business births rising to 1,240 and 2,935 respectively. Business deaths for the same period were 640 and 765 respectively.

Rhondda Cynon Taf's Annual Monitoring Report 2018 on the Local Development Plan indicated that both the housing and commercial markets in the county borough were experiencing growth, but there is a concern that the decision taken to leave the European Union may lead to the stagnation or decline in sectors such as production, construction and agriculture.

However, there is the potential of significant opportunities in specific sectors becoming available within the county as a result of major infra-structure and other capital investment, the development of the Metro and the impact of Cardiff City Deal as well as the Council's development of key town centres across the county.

The needs of local businesses and opportunities offered on a regional basis for employment must be considered when developing learning and skills programmes so that individuals who want to work are provided with the qualifications and work experience to achieve their goal.

Where do we want to be?

We want to live in a community where:

- all people have access to the support they need to develop their skills and knowledge so that they can achieve their potential and live healthy and rewarding lives;
- everyone who wants to work is supported to gain and stay in employment;
- those who want to progress in work are able to benefit from opportunities to further develop their skills and gain promotion;
- there is access to training and learning throughout a person's life as a commitment to lifelong learning is essential for prosperity

How do we get there?

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's key priorities for the next 3 years are to:

1. Work with partners to maximise the resources available in Rhondda Cynon Taf for skills development and employment support so that more people are supported to:
 - gain skills for life
 - gain skills for employment
 - secure and stay, and progress in paid employment
2. Work with employers to identify and respond to current and projected skills gaps;
3. Prepare for the impact of Brexit by exploring alternative options for supporting employment programmes in the county e.g. harnessing community benefits to better support the development of employment opportunities for residents.

Commercial business needs must be a driver for the number and type of courses and programmes being delivered so that customers have a realistic prospect of employment, and/or promotion for those already in employment.

In order to achieve these priorities we will:

- Work with training provider partners to ensure there is access to a wide curriculum at all levels with pathways for progression onto higher level programmes
- Work with training and advice provider partners to ensure there are programmes to support people to address barriers to employment and personal development
- Work with employers to prepare people for current and future vacancies and provide on-going support once an individual has gained employment
- Work with employers to promote opportunities for progression, personal development and career enhancement
- Encourage and influence employers to take positive action and promote equality for disabled people when recruiting, selecting, managing and developing staff
- Work with local communities to identify the learning and skills needs of their residents
- Deliver employability support and access to community learning at local venues including community hubs across the county

Outcomes and impacts

We aim to achieve the following outcomes and impacts:

- there will be an improvement in the self-esteem and confidence of customers who engage with our programmes
- an improvement in the health and well-being of people participating in learning programmes
- an increase in individual skills and qualifications so that the percentage of people with no qualifications in Rhondda Cynon Taf will be lower than the average for Wales
- training programmes offered will be relevant to the skills needs identified by employers
- more volunteering options will be available
- more people will benefit from good-quality work experience opportunities
- more in-work support will be available to people once they have entered employment
- customer satisfaction with the level of support offered will be increased
- more opportunities will be available for people who have a disability or a long-term health condition to re-enter or sustain employment

What actions shall we carry out to achieve these outcomes?

We will work with partners in a co-ordinated way that makes sure people receive effective and targeted support to develop skills and knowledge, and gain and remain in work. Appendix 3 includes the Action Plan developed to implement the strategy. This will be monitored regularly by the Strategic Employment Group that includes Council services and a wide range of training provider and advice provider partners from a variety of sectors.

Evaluation

The methodology used to evaluate the success of this strategy and associated action plan will include analysis of:

- relevant quantitative data (facts and figures)
- relevant qualitative information (case studies of individuals and customer views)

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This Action Plan will be liable to change as funding is reviewed annually, either on an academic or financial year basis, and contractual obligations may change to reflect new funding priorities.

What do we want to achieve?	What actions are required to achieve the success we need?	Provision delivered	Responsibility	What are the key PIs that will demonstrate achievement?
<p>All people have access to the support they need to develop their skills and knowledge so that they can achieve their potential and live healthy and rewarding lives;</p>	<p>Work with training provider partners to ensure there is access to a wide curriculum at all levels with pathways for progression onto higher level programmes.</p>	<p><u>Adult Community Learning (ACL)</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adult Community Learning provision to be jointly developed with ACL partners and delivered at community venues across the county. <p>Provision to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential skills assessments; • Essential skills literacy programmes; • Essential skills numeracy programmes; • Basic digital skills programmes; • Pre-employability skills. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. A joint strategy for Essential Skills will be developed in line with national guidance to improve the number of people enrolling on the programme as well as to improve the completion and attainment outcome rates. 3. Further develop links with GP practices, the Council's Public Health and Protection Service and the Local Health Board Coordinators to establish a programme of courses in 	<p>RCT Adult Education Service</p>	<p>There will be an improvement in the self-esteem and confidence of customers who engage with our programmes.</p> <p>An improvement in individual skills and qualifications.</p> <p>There will be an improvement in the health and well-being of people participating in learning programme.</p>

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		<p>partnership with GPs to promote well-being and improve mental health.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Work with public sector and third sector community hubs to sign-post learners onto appropriate provision within local communities as appropriate. 5. Progression pathways onto accredited further/higher learning to be developed with FE and other partners in line with learner needs. 6. Work with relevant partners to expand Welsh-medium provision for adults. 7. Consultation to be undertaken with learners, employers and the wider community to identify future learner needs and to support co-production of programmes where appropriate. 8. Evaluation of programmes to be undertaken by relevant delivery partners and learner views considered when programmes are being further developed. 9. A variety of promotion and marketing activities to be undertaken to ensure that residents are aware of the breadth of provision available and how to access it, with a specific emphasis on social media but retaining more traditional means to ensure that no-one is excluded from the messages. 		
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		<p>10. All partners to ensure that their provision meets Estyn's requirements as outlined in the Common Inspection Framework for adult community learning.</p> <p>11. ACL partners to work together to support a smooth transition from the current funding and delivery arrangements to the planned changes from September 2020.</p>		
		<p><u>Provision for youth</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Youth Engagement and Participation Service will continue to provide effective guidance to young people making post-16 decisions regarding further education, employment or training through one-to-one support. 2. Provision for youth will be mapped so that there is a good understanding of what is available, who is delivering the provision and whether there are any gaps that need to be filled to ensure that young people have access to the right support at the right time and in the right place. 3. Provision for development of skills in a range of subject areas will continue to be delivered at youth clubs across the county. These range from animation and coding to woodworking, food hygiene and construction. 	<p>YEPS</p> <p>YEPS</p>	<p>Planning will be based on evidence and resources used effectively to maximise impact.</p> <p>There will be an improvement in the young people's confidence, self-esteem and employability prospects.</p>

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		<p>4. Accreditation opportunities which link with the new school curriculum will continue to be offered.</p> <p>5. Encouragement to further develop reading skills will be provided through initiatives with the Library Service including the Summer Reading Challenge, and volunteering opportunities will continue to be available through this programme.</p> <p>6. Continue to deliver the ESF-funded Inspire 2 Work programme for young people aged 16-24 years and offer a varied experience of learning and personal development for young people including specific programmes for Children Looked After.</p> <p>7. Continue to deliver the ESF-funded CfW (Priority 3) 1-1 mentoring support programme for young people aged 16-24 years who are NEET. The programme also offers opportunities to access free training courses through the WG commissioned ACT programme and provides support to overcome financial barriers to employment e.g. ID, transport, childcare, interview clothing.</p> <p>8. CfW+ will continue to give employment support (as per CfW programme outlined above) to young people aged 16-24 years who are NEET</p>	<p>YEPS</p> <p>Library Service</p> <p>RCT Adult Education Service / EET Team</p> <p>CfW</p> <p>CfW+</p>	<p>Improvement in literacy skills.</p> <p>More people will benefit from good-quality work experience opportunities.</p> <p>More young people will be supported to enter employment.</p>
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		<p>and not eligible for support through any other service or grant funded programme.</p> <p>9. Continue to deliver the Traineeship programme for CLA (Step in the Right Direction) – 6 YP enrolled onto programme per year. 2 year paid supported employment programme. YP placed within various service areas within the council, to improve employability skills/opportunities.</p> <p>10. Continue to deliver the councils corporate apprenticeship scheme in line with the councils corporate priorities.</p> <p>11. Continue to deliver opportunities for young people to engage in arts and creative industries programmes and to use the skills developed through engagement with the arts to address barriers to personal development and improve their employability.</p>	<p>EET Team</p> <p>EET Team</p> <p>Arts Service</p>	<p>Level of qualification frameworks linked to job role. Ranging from level 2 to level 5.</p> <p>An improvement in health and well-being.</p> <p>More access to good – quality work experience opportunities.</p> <p>Training offered will be relevant to the skills needs of employers.</p>
Everyone who wants to work is supported to gain and stay in employment	Work with training and advice provider partners to ensure there are programmes to support people to address barriers to	<p>1. Ensure that delivery partners are aware of, and respond to the needs of people with disabilities.</p> <p>2. Work in partnership to ensure that young people are supported with travel training</p>	<p>Cwm Taf Employment Group</p> <p>YEPS</p>	<p>There will be an improvement in the self-esteem and confidence of customers who engage with our programmes.</p>

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	<p>employment and personal development.</p>	<p>opportunities through a package of theory and practical work sessions.</p> <p>3. Continue to offer support for young people to encourage progression through the Careers Wales Tier 5 model and this includes young people on EOTAS provision, Year 11, Year 12 and Year 13 leavers and those who have not secured a destination post school.</p> <p>4. Develop a package of support for young people with mental health issues and those at risk of becoming homeless.</p> <p>5. Offer support for young parents to adjust to parenthood and support with future access to employment, education and training.</p> <p>6. Continue to deliver the ESF-funded CfW employment support programmes (Priority 1 and 3) for people aged 16+. The programmes offer opportunities to access free training courses through the WG commissioned ACT programme and provides support to overcome financial barriers to employment e.g. ID, transport, childcare, interview clothing.</p> <p>7. Continue to deliver the WG funded CfW+ employment support programme across RCT offering 1-1 mentoring for people aged 16+, who are not eligible for support through any other service or grant funded programme.</p>	<p>YEPS</p> <p>YEPS</p> <p>YEPS</p> <p>CfW/CfW+</p>	<p>More in-work support will be available to people once they have entered employment.</p> <p>More volunteering opportunities will be available.</p>
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		<p>The programme will also include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to training opportunities as outlined under Adult Community Learning above; • sourcing local work placement opportunities for clients as part of their pathway to progressing into employment; • a programme of in work support to clients to help sustain their employment and to people at risk of or are in poverty who want to increase their hours of work or upskill; • support to overcome financial barriers to employment e.g. ID, transport, childcare, interview clothing; • a range of local engagement opportunities for people who are furthest away from the labour market and not yet ready to look for employment or access accredited learning. Local engagement plans are developed quarterly with delivery partners and are based on locally identified needs; • a programme of commissioned employment support activity i.e. work clubs. • Targets for 2019/20: 		<p>More people will benefit from good-quality work experience opportunities.</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 900 people engaged - 350 into employment - 450 gaining a vocational qualification - 100 completing a work trial, placement or volunteering opportunity - 75 referrals into other (employment support provision) <p>3 Plan collaboratively with partners for the impact of the ending of ESF employment programmes by exploring innovative ways in which employment support and provision can be maintained.</p> <p>4 Plan for the impact of Welsh Government grant-funding changes to the CfW+ employment support programme/Legacy fund from March 2021.</p>		
	<p>Work with employers to prepare people for current and future vacancies and provide on-going support once an individual has gained employment.</p>	<p>1. Continue to expand relationships with employers who have vacancies and develop bespoke programmes to train unemployed people and those who are economically inactive to access these vacancies. The following sectors to be prioritised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and social care; • Administration; • Industrial cleaning; • Internal council vacancies, including leisure and horticultural. 	CfW+	<p>More people will benefit from good-quality work experience opportunities.</p> <p>More people will be supported to enter employment.</p> <p>More in-work support will be available to people once they have entered employment.</p>

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		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Continue to employ an Employer Liaison Officer to engage with employers and identify suitable options for work experience and volunteering to upskill residents. 3. Work closely with the Regeneration and Prosperity Service to identify areas where employers are developing their businesses so that skills development programmes can be implemented with partners to prepare residents to fill those vacancies. 4. Work with partners to assess how much support is available for individuals once they have gained employment with a view to enhancing what is on offer if resources can be identified. 5. Ensure that teams have a good understanding of the current and future skills needs of the area and make use of the data available, for example through the Regional Skills Partnership and Data Cymru, to plan for the delivery of relevant learning and skills programmes as well as for the up-skilling of service staff. 6. Analyse the outcomes of the extended Community Benefits pilot and assess whether it offers opportunities to support access to skills and, if so, identify a process by which 	<p>Community Development Service</p>	
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		<p>this can be facilitated in line with business needs.</p>		
	<p>Encourage and influence employers to take positive action and promote equality for disabled people when recruiting, selecting, managing and developing staff.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with colleagues within the Council and external partners to raise awareness of the ESF project – Building Resilience, Prosperity and Wellbeing that will deliver, among other things, individual and organisational support to enable people with disabilities or work-limiting health conditions to return to work and provide advice on development of Equality and Diversity policies. 2. Implement the Gateway to Employment programme: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 young people with additional learning needs on placement with the council; • Supported placements in partnership with Coleg Y Cymoedd. 	<p>RCT HR</p> <p>EET team</p>	<p>More opportunities will be available for people who have a disability or long-term health condition to re-enter or sustain employment.</p> <p>Customer satisfaction with the level of support offered will be increased.</p> <p>Job coaches providing support for YP and managers.</p>
<p>Those who want to progress in work are able to benefit from opportunities to further develop their skills and gain promotion.</p>	<p>Work with employers to promote opportunities for progression, personal development and career enhancement</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with Council services and our wider network of partners to identify training that is available to employed people and highlight this to employers for example essential skills training, Welsh language skills, health and safety etc. 2. Upskill existing employees under the apprenticeship qualification frameworks. 	<p>Community Services</p> <p>EET team</p>	<p>An increase in skills and qualifications.</p> <p>An increase in skills and career progression opportunities.</p>

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		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Continue to invest in staff skills to ensure that the workforce has the level of expertise required to adapt to changing needs. 4. Continue to offer opportunities for staff to develop youth work qualifications and continue to roll out the volunteering programme to encourage an uptake in young people deciding on youth work as a viable career. 	<p>Community Services</p> <p>YEPS</p>	
<p>There is access to training and learning throughout a person's life as a commitment to lifelong learning is essential for prosperity</p>	<p>Work with local communities to identify the learning and skills needs of their residents.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work undertaken to map the learning and skills needs of the 10 planned Neighbourhood Network areas in RCT will be gathered as they are developed with a focus for 2019/20 on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yr Hwb (Ferndale) • Canolfan Pennar (Mountain Ash) • Porth 2. Information will be shared with partners in order to support their planning, for example the ACL's adult community curriculum. 3. Each Neighbourhood Network will publicise the availability of support and programmes to wider community members, taking feedback from the community in relation to learning needs, and influencing provision. 	<p>RCT Community Development</p>	<p>Collaboration across training and advice provider organisations will increase, and better use made of limited resources.</p> <p>Resources will be targeted at the areas of highest need.</p> <p>Customer satisfaction with the level of support offered will be increased.</p> <p>People are able to access more learning opportunities in their local communities.</p>

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		<p>4. CfW+ will continue to provide a range of local engagement and training opportunities for people who are furthest away from the labour market and not yet ready to look for employment or access accredited learning. Local engagement plans are developed quarterly with delivery partners and are based on locally identified needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targets for 2019/20:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– 843 people feel more positive about their mental wellbeing– 69 people with increased physical activity– 170 people gain basic ICT/Digital skills– 314 people know how to access help and support (information and advice)– 196 people feel part of the community– 176 young people know how to access help and support (information and advice)– 110 young people feel part of the community		
		<p>5. Community Insights and Value software will be shared and used to support funding applications to address evidenced need.</p>		
		<p>6. A Learner Voice consultation will be undertaken to gather and assess the feedback from learners on their experiences</p>		

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		of engaging with learning and skills programmes, and the feedback used to inform future developments.		
	Deliver employability support and access to community learning at local venues including community hubs across the county.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain delivery of CfW and CfW+ provision at 13 key community centres across the county. 2. Continue to offer access to community learning and employability support at all libraries as well as free use of rooms to training provider partners for delivery of their programmes. 3. Assess the needs of each Neighbourhood Network area prior to the establishment of community hubs mapping the level of provision available and the most appropriate place for delivery to ensure access to community-based provision within each area. 	Community Development	Easy access to community-based programmes at local venues.