

Environment & Economy Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 16th May 2023
Report Subject	Communities for Work
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Economy
Report Author	Chief Officer (Planning, Environment and Economy)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Communities for Work programme was created by Welsh Government in 2016. Funded from a mixture of European and Welsh Government resources, it provided local government in Wales with resources to support people furthest from the labour market to overcome barriers to employment and learning through long-term mentoring support. As a European funded programme, it ended on 31 March 2023.

In December 2022 it was announced that Flintshire would receive sufficient Welsh Government funding to continue to provide the Communities for Work support and enable the Council to retain the entire staff team to do so.

This report provides an update on the programme and the changes which have taken place and its future priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the closure of the Communities for Work programme and the new arrangements to support long term unemployed people are considered and supported.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	Explaining the Communities for Work programme
	<u>Background</u>
1.01	<p>The Communities for Work programme was created by Welsh Government in 2016. Funded from a mixture of European and Welsh Government resources, it provided local government in Wales with resources to support people furthest from the labour market to overcome barriers to employment and learning through long term mentoring support. The programme was based on the previous Communities First infrastructure locally and nationally and was limited to where it could operate and who it could support due to eligibility constraints. As a European funded programme, it ended on 31 March 2023.</p>
1.02	<p>The programme was delivered in Flintshire by the Employability team within the Enterprise and Regeneration service. In Flintshire, the programme supported the employment of six members of staff. Since the start of the Communities for Work (C4W) programme, 688 individuals have received support with 244 moving into employment or learning as a result.</p>
1.03	<p>Welsh Government have also funded a complementary programme that has supported individuals that have not been eligible for C4W. This is Communities for Work Plus (C4W+) and it has operated across all of Flintshire delivered by additional staff located in the same team. The programme has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provided mentoring support to help individuals to overcome barriers to employment and learning;• enabled training activity to help individuals become ready for work in specific sectors,• helped employers to recruit locally;• contributed to the response to redundancy situations; and• co-ordinated local employability support to help ensure individuals get a joined-up service.
1.04	<p>A number of case studies are provided below to illustrate the work of the service through both the C4W and C4W+ programmes.</p> <p>The service supported Mr. A. who was homeless due to alcoholism and poor mental health. Council staff helped Mr. A. to compile a CV and arranged for him to attend jobs fairs and confidence building training. Through attendance at the jobs fairs, Mr. A. has secured employment locally. Mr. A. is actively managing his health conditions and rebuilding his family relationships.</p>

	<p>Mr. B. was 18 when he was referred to the service with no qualifications and no work history. Mr. B. wanted to work in construction and was supported to enroll on a college course. Unfortunately, he dropped out of the course and has moved from job to job since. His mentor has maintained contact with him to offer support and encouragement and recently provided him with access to an accredited learning in construction opportunity. Now aged 21, Mr. B. has secured work in construction.</p> <p>Ms. C. wanted to set up her own business despite a number of challenging life events and both physical and mental ill-health. Over 12 months, the service has provided support and encouragement and has worked closely with the Department for Work and Pensions and Business Wales to guide Ms. C. through the stages she needed to work through to set up her business. Ms. C has now started her business</p> <p>Ms. D. hadn't worked for three years due to poor mental and physical health. Ms. D. wanted to gain employment and also to write a book about autism, due to her life experiences. Through regular support and local partnerships, the service was able to provide access to IT equipment and training for Ms. D. and with job search help and skills. Ms. D. is now employed in a job that she finds very rewarding and is part-way through writing her book.</p>
	<u>Programme changes</u>
1.05	<p>In 2022, Welsh Government announced that the C4W+ funding would be restructured from April 2023 to move away from the Communities First infrastructure and formula and to take account of the loss of the C4W funding. In December 2022 it was announced that Flintshire would receive sufficient C4W+ funding to continue the scale of service that had been covered by the two programmes together, enabling the Council to retain the entire staff team. The service, as a result of these decisions, now employs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Leader • Finance and Monitoring Officer • Triage Support Worker • Two Lead Officers (employer liaison) • 10 Mentors
1.06	<p>The team is currently in the process of relocating from the Care and Repair centre in Shotton to Ty Dewi Sant, Ewloe. The majority of the work of the service is delivered in community venues across the County and this will remain unchanged.</p>
	<u>Future priorities</u>
1.07	<p>The service, in delivering the C4W+ programme, will focus on:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engaging and providing long term mentoring support to those furthest from the labour market to enable them to overcome barriers to employment and learning; • support employers in recruiting suitable candidates especially through the provision of jobs fairs; • provide short work-focused learning opportunities to individuals to provide the skills and accreditations they need to enter employment in key sectors including health and social care, construction, retail, and hospitality; • co-ordinate employability support in the County to ensure participants get a joined-up service; and • contribute to the rapid response to redundancy team in Flintshire.
1.08	<p>Individuals join the programme from a wide range of referral routes and can self-refer themselves. If Members are aware of individuals who might benefit from the programme then they are asked to provide the contact details below.</p> <p>cfwtrriage@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>The programme is 100% funded by Welsh Government so there are no resource implications currently arising from the programme. The Welsh Government funding for 2023/2024 is £865,853.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>The main risk to the Council is that the programme fails to deliver its profiled targets in terms of people engaged onto the programme and then reaching suitable outcomes; employment, learning or voluntary activity.</p> <p>The mitigation measures for this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the continued employment of a diverse and highly skilled mentor team to engage and support participants; • the co-ordination of a broad coalition of support agencies to cross-refer participants and to ensure joined-up and effective support packages are provided; • employment of a manager and development officers in the programme to build relationships with partners and employers and to set up specific support initiatives that further improve participants chances to progress; • regular monitoring of programme performance internally and by Welsh Government; and • inclusion of this risk in the Council's strategic risk register for further monitoring.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	None.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Niall Waller (Enterprise and Regeneration Manager) Telephone: 01352 702137 E-mail: niall.waller@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	<p>GLOSSARY OF TERMS These are provided corporately on the Infonet (link) and maintained by the Executive Office</p>
	<p>Communities First – a Welsh Government funded programme for community development operating from 2001 until 2016. The programme operated only in the most deprived neighbourhoods in Wales.</p> <p>Communities for Work (C4W) – a programme delivering employment support through European Commission and Welsh Government funds.</p> <p>Communities for Work Plus (C4W+) – a programme delivering employment support funded by Welsh Government.</p>