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SEMLEP SOCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY - CASE STUDIES

The Social Inclusion Strategy is an overarching document setting out SEMLEP's objectives for both the ESIF and SEP. In order to deliver social inclusion across the South East Midlands the following three strategic objectives have been identified:

1. Worklessness – overcoming barriers to work
2. Financial Inclusion – tackling poverty both in and out of work
3. Community Investment - promoting and supporting sustainable, inclusive economic development

The case studies within this report illustrate what can be achieved and delivered by the VCSE sector. These projects are a small sample and evidence the areas of key interventions set out within the Social Inclusion Strategy.

The case studies within this report provide a short overview of the aims of the project and where possible example a success story. It is envisaged that links to each full case study will be available on the SEMLEP website once the SEP and ESIF strategies have been approved by Government.

WORKLESSNESS

Employment Services, Job Clubs and Skills

- **AGE UK Employment Services– Milton Keynes**

A 57 year-old client, recently made redundant, had been working as a nanny but had found the work isolating and wanted a role working with a team but lacked the confidence to move on. Working with her Adviser, she discussed her strengths and elements of previous roles she had enjoyed. She attended job clubs, training courses and group activities to help her work through the process of getting back into work.

Her feedback was "I found the whole experience working with Age UK Employment Services to be extremely positive and worthwhile. The support from the team and other clients was invaluable at a time when my confidence was low. In particular the Transferable Skills Course stands out for me as it encouraged me to think back and recognise the vast array of skills I had learnt over the years, and how these could be transferred into a new and exciting role."

- **Employment Support for the Over 50's (LUT31) – The Learning Partnership, Luton**

Success story 1; Marie joined the Over 50's programme in April after returning to Jobseekers Allowance after a long period of sickness and had not been in



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employment since 1989. Her JCP adviser stated that Marie had no IT skills, needed support with job searching and had multiple barriers to employment.

Marie now has a CV, her first email account, a working knowledge of Universal Jobmatch and had completed the basic IT training set for her. The next step was to update her skills and Marie undertook an accredited IT qualification which she passed. Marie has since completed Level 2 Food Hygiene for Catering and Retail and is keen to put her new skills to good use. Marie's feedback to the support given by AGE UK was *"I have enjoyed my time on the programme. I feel I have made huge progress having come from nothing to gaining qualifications. ."*

Success Story 2: Dave joined the Over 50's programme after being made redundant from his trade in hat manufacturing after 35 years. Over the following weeks Dave's attendance at group sessions with the delivery provider and the Work Club was consistent and he showed positive attitude and commitment to his learning. His hard work paid off as Dave now had the skills to search for suitable online vacancies, a working knowledge of Universal Jobmatch, a new up to date digital CV uploaded to job sites and a recognised qualification in IT. As a consequence Dave has been successful in securing a full time permanent position as a postal worker for Royal Mail.

- **Employment Support for Adults with Disabilities – Shaw Trust (Luton BC)**

The following success story is from Shaun L who participated in the above programme;

Shaun says *"I have secured a job at MITIE Securities as a Door Supervisor working full time on a permanent contract. I came to Shaw Trust with no work history for the past 25 years. Even with this huge gap I was determined to find work in an area that interested me. I wanted to do Security work as I felt that was the role that suited me the most. It was suggested that I enrol on a security course which I was happy to accept. Before I went on the course the advisors developed my CV from scratch and built up my confidence by keeping in contact on a regular basis and talking me through the processes of employment and how to go about finding work after the course. He also prepped me on what to expect on an interview which I found highly beneficial. Within 2 months I and finally secured a place at MITIE on a permanent contract. This has changed my whole life around....."*

- **Unlocking Potential of Women – Luton BC**

The Unlocking Potential of Women was a project delivered by the University of Bedfordshire, co funded by ESF. The project was designed to help women working



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(either full or part time) in small and medium sized enterprises to develop the generic skills needed in the workplace. These included team working, problem solving, organisation and self -development, effective communication, writing and IT skills. They were also supported to develop strategies for managing career and personal development, and to build their confidence and self-esteem, thereby increasing their ability to access further learning and career opportunities.

There were two assessment options within the programme. The first was the Introductory Certificate in Team Leadership accredited by the Institute of Leadership and Management based on the open learning material. The second option was the Career Development Module, which is part of the University's Professional Development Foundation Degree. All of the women who participated say they now have increased confidence which enables them to approach promotion opportunities or career changes more easily. Some have applied for promotion in their current job, whilst others are exploring ways to combine further or higher education routes with their existing roles.

- **SNC JOB CLUB & JOBMATCH SERVICES – South Northants**

This programme has enabled the core support services delivered in the two market towns to be replicated in the rural areas of the district. To achieve the successful outcomes SNC have partnered with:

- 'Children's Centre' Job Club Programme – Co funded by South Northants and Northamptonshire County Council to deliver Job Club and Job Match Services in the district wide Children's Centres
- South Northants Volunteer Bureau (SNVB) Village Networks Programme – Initially through a programme of Village Hall Job Club/ Job Match sessions in 2012

This initiative has been expanded to form a rural job club/job match programme in the rural areas of the district. The Council have partnered with the 'Children's Centre' Job Club Programme and South Northants Volunteer Bureau (SNVB) Village Networks Programme. To help rural young people to access the service SNC brokered agreement with Northamptonshire County Council's dial-a-ride bus service to issue at 'no-cost' to the Job Club fifty 10-trip tickets - faced value of £1500 - to be distributed to Job Club /Job Match Members to enable travel to interviews or to travel to work in more remote locations in the crucial early weeks of a new job.



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- **Community Ambassadors Leadership Programme (CALP) – Milton Keynes Equality Council**

The Adult CALP and Young CALP programmes were funded by the Home Office under the connecting Communities Programme. Akin successfully completed the CALP Programme and then moved onto working at Cranfield University and then the Open University. Akin now runs his own Consultancy Company Fieldcross Limited.

Akin says:

"CALP was a well-structured leadership programme that sought to equip people with skills to be more participative in their communities. The greatest impact for me was the placement of people in select committees in the city which enabled one to gain greater knowledge of Milton Keynes and how it is run and to participate in practical terms in the decision-making process – Thank You CALP for making a difference to my LIFE and the lives of my colleagues"

- **Gypsy and Traveller Employment Support – Central Bedfordshire Council**

The project has been developed to support unemployed or economically inactive gypsies and travellers with training to enable participants to move towards or into employment or self-employment. The project provides Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and offers training with a focus on employability skills as well as work experience placements.

Gypsy and Traveller groups maintain high levels of privacy and cultural separation. Trust is a key feature to successful engagement and the project employs a delivery specialist with established links within these communities. The project used the 'Gypsy wheel' symbol on their promotional literature to signal to members of these communities that the training and support is tailored to their needs.

All participants take part in a one-day course of employability skills with a minimum of 20 participants from the Central Bedfordshire area over the duration of the project. The course and workbook have been designed specifically to meet the needs of this group and can be adapted to different literacy levels and include such skills as job searching and applications, CV writing and interview techniques.



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Youth

- **Youth Employment Initiative – South Northants Council**

This Initiative is to support young people (16-24 year olds) into employment through work placements and work experience and apprenticeships, converting more job vacancies into apprenticeships and promoting the benefits of young people to employers. The Council also works with local schools through Assemblies and visits to local employers to promote the benefits and value of apprenticeships in our district. The Initiative programme of events and projects includes:

- Work Ready Event – The Chairman's Youth Employment Initiative partnered up with Barclaycard to provide a half day Work Ready Event for 90 Students from different schools across the district.
- Take your daughter/son to work day - This scheme enables students whose parents at work for SNC to find out what the world of work is really like. The scheme is being rolled out to other businesses in South Northamptonshire in 2014/15.

Volunteering

- **Volunteering into Employment (ViE) – Bedfordshire Rural Community Council**

ViE uses supported voluntary work placements as a way into employment for people with barriers to the labour market. Each participant receives a personalised package including workshops on developing employability; intensive one-to-one support; and managed volunteer placements in areas such as childcare, cleaning, administration support, data entry, warehousing, seasonal horticulture, and grounds maintenance. ViE demonstrates the value of smaller-scale, 'niche' projects at a time when much back to work support is being packaged up into large contracts:

Success Story: A good example is a former car mechanic who had been unemployed for 2 years due to health issues and was unable to return to his previous line of work. ViE found him a voluntary position teaching mechanics to children who had been excluded from school. After his 6-week placement, he was offered a paid position starting in January 2013. As at May 2014, he is still in employment.



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- **Employer Supported Volunteering Brokerage Programme – Community Action MK**

The project aim was to connect corporate organisations and their employees with charities and community groups to encourage and facilitate skills sharing, resource sharing, and mutually beneficial relationships. The longer term view of developing relationships between corporate organisations and the VCS will enable a more fluid cross sharing of skills and resources. The offer to Corporates includes aligning business values and behaviours and being able to incorporate these into the development of bespoke opportunities.

The corporate organisations currently involved in the programme are Home Retail Group and Network Rail - with a combined staff workforce of over 5,500 employees. There are also over 40 Charities and Community groups taking part in the programme.

- **Luton Borough Council's Volunteering Scheme**

'Volunteering has saved my life' – Paul's story

Unemployed, demotivated 49-year-old Paul admits he was at the lowest point of his life at the start of 2013. *"It had been almost 10 years since I had a job,"* explained Paul. *"I had chronically low self-esteem, I'd forgotten what it was like to exercise and spent my days at home eating, watching TV and feeling sorry for myself."*

Paul contacted Luton Borough Council's volunteer scheme and secured a volunteer role at Luton's Foodbank which opened last year. *"I was quite shy at first," said Paul. "But I loved the work. It was great knowing that the job I was doing was making a real difference to people's lives. It was probably because I know what it is like to go without food. I've been there myself. Helping people really lifted my mood."*

He built up a reputation as being a very hard working, reliable and trusted member of staff. It wasn't long before he was given more responsibility. He was given the keys so he could open and close the Foodbank before and after his shifts. Paul said: *"In just a few short months I had a new life. A better life! I was out in the fresh air and making a real difference to people's lives. I finally had more confidence."* Paul is now a full time permanent member of staff and working as a warehouse operative and van driver at the Foodbank. *"The volunteer scheme is amazing. I can't speak highly enough of it. I actually hand out flyers to people about it as I want others to benefit from it the way I have. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for volunteering. It has changed my life."*



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FINANCIAL INCLUSION

- **Wheels to Work – Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire**

There have recently been two Wheels to Work programmes operating in Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. This project is a moped loan scheme for young people (aged 16-19 or up to 25 if the person has a disability) from rural areas to enable them to journey to work or college.

Some recipient comments to from the Buckinghamshire scheme

"Without having access to this scheme I would not have been able to accept a place on a course in Marlowe as I would not have been able to get there!"

"Without this scheme it would have been difficult for me to carry on with my education and to work after school each evening"

"Excellent idea which enabled me to get to college as with it I could not get there"

A recipient from the Bedfordshire scheme:

"A level student Nathan faced a two hour journey each day to Luton Sixth Form College, using two buses; but on joining W2W his journey time was cut to just half an hour. He was also able to travel more easily to his part-time job, and gained greater independence. In the process Nathan discovered the world of motorcycling, riding out with a neighbour who is a motorbike enthusiast. Now Nathan has purchased his own more powerful motorcycle, and regularly joins a local group on rides. 'The scheme has made an amazing difference to my life' said Nathan. 'I'd recommend it to anyone!'"

- **Northampton Credit Union**

Success Story 1- Kaylee is a single mother with one child who receives £20.30 per week child benefit. She approached the Northampton Credit Union November 2010 for a Christmas loan. She asked for £500 when asked why she needed that much. She told me that she'd had a visit from a doorstep lender who'd asked if she'd "like £500 for Christmas". We explained that, if she took out such a loan, that she'd be making weekly payments until next Christmas until she'd paid back something like £800 – around £16 per week. We agreed on a £250 loan with 30 weekly repayments of £9 per plus a mandatory £1 saving contribution into a personal account. Since 2010 Kaylee has taken out loans to replace her washing machine followed by two similar Christmas loans in 2011, 2012 and 2013.



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When she took out her latest loan, Kaylee received a statement showing that she now had over £200 in her savings account and she was "gobsmacked". As a result Kaylee immediately made arrangements for us to keep £3.30 per week on top of her £9 loan repayment so that we would only pay £8pw to her bank after retaining a total of £12.30 from her Child Benefit. This would not have been possible if Kaylee had taken the original loan from the doorstep lender in 2010.

Success Story 2- Geraldine is in social housing in the north of Northamptonshire. Her social landlord has joined our regional scheme (East Midlands Credit Union) in order to help social housing tenants to cope with the advent of Universal Credit. The social landlord has arranged for Geraldine to set up a Rent Payment Account with ourselves and we now collect the current "cocktail" of benefits that Geraldine receives and we make a weekly rental payment to the social landlord and make regular weekly payment to Geraldine's bank account. She is also saving £1 per week from her benefits into a Credit Union share account. By this method, we, in co-operation with the social landlord, have brought some order to Geraldine's chaotic finances and she is now able to budget much better.

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

- **Business Mentoring Skills Project – MKCE, Milton Keynes**

The driver for this project was the demise of the Business Line Service Support two years ago. This lack of support and the continuing Big Society Volunteering Agenda has meant that the VCSE sector is being pulled in different directions, leaving staff, trustees and directors without support. This project provides peer to peer learning and support using skills (P2P) within the VCSE sector and Mentor support from the Private Sector to build this business resilience.

Feedback from MK Play Association

"I had an issue regarding the positioning of MKPA in the new, more difficult funding environment. I put the issue to the P2P network and the discussion not only gave me real areas to work on, it highlighted that we were in a stronger position than I had thought. I was given a positive reality check that boosted my confidence and came away with a completely different attitude as well as concrete actions."

- **Enterprise Club – South Northants Council**

Following changes to Business Link Services in 2011, an interim measure was put into place using existing Job Club/Job Match sessions (see Worklessness section) to triage any business start-up enquiries through a small number of local mentors both



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generalist and innovators. The scheme aims to enable anyone considering setting up in Business to access free and confidential support and advice and to date over 40 clients have received 1:1 support and 21 entrepreneurs are currently being coached and mentored in their plans.

- **Building Enterprising Communities – Central Bedfordshire Council**

The project objective was to promote enterprise to 420 unemployed participants in disadvantaged areas of Bedfordshire. Participants were supported through job search and offered business start-up advice as appropriate. The success of this project is due to having local specialist delivery partners operating mostly on an individual basis. It gives credence to our belief that localised delivery gets the best results.

- **Blackthorn Good Neighbours – Northampton**

Blackthorn Good Neighbours (BGN) is a community development organisation and charitable company that was established 15 years ago to work with the community of Blackthorn and surrounds, it works with residents to address the impact of disadvantage, improve lives and create a better place to live. Their approach to community development is to work alongside local people, local organisations, partner organisations and statutory providers to build the community's capacity for change. BGN delivery children and youth programmes from 0 to 18, offer adult literacy and ESOL classes, provide access to an IT suite so that local people can assess the internet as well as courses on employability and personal development.

Success Story; "Growing Together is the name local people have given to the Local Trust funding of £1m which has been allocated for the estates of Lings Lumbertubs Blackthorn and Goldings. The community plan that we produced was based on the views of over 500 local people and identified areas of things for young people to do, fear of crime, and improvements to the specific parks and open spaces in the area. In May 2013 a series of 4 short training sessions were planned and all the local residents who had expressed an interest in the project were invited to attend. Following these sessions the beginning of the Partnership Board emerged and a year on there are 14 regular Board members who are responsible for the 'big' decision about how money is spent. BGN Business Manager"



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MAYBE MAGAZINE CIC – Buckingham Community Foundation

Maybe Magazine delivers its programme in Milton Keynes and in Aylesbury Vale. Maybe Magazine publishes a quarterly lifestyle and business magazine and eZine, across Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale. There are in excess of 33,000 readers. Most of the content for the magazine is produced with the help of unemployed and disadvantaged individuals, including those with mental health problems, ex-offenders, homeless individuals, women returners, drug and alcohol problems and learning difficulties. This is achieved through the delivery of both accredited and non-accredited learning and work experience programmes.