

The Supporting Independence Programme

The Supporting Independence Programme (SIP) was set up in April 2002 and evolved from Kent's first Public Service Agreements 2001/4.

The aim of SIP is to support, co-ordinate and re-focus the County Council's work and that of our partners in the public, private and community sectors in order to help people achieve greater independence and lift themselves out of dependency and reduce the welfare spend across Kent.

SIP enables those who are reliant on benefit to lift themselves out of dependency into a more meaningful existence where they are able to support themselves and their families. In addition to identify initiatives that tackle the root causes that create dependency and improve individuals' life chances to prevent them becoming dependant in the first place.

KCC's Supporting Independence Programme (SIP) is working to address this situation both through preventative measures, working with young people to prevent them from slipping into a life of dependency, and remedial activities to try to reduce the burden of welfare benefit expenditure and lift significant numbers of working-age people out of worklessness and into meaningful, sustainable employment.

By targeting people affected by disadvantage and deprivation SIP impacts on key wider determinants of health inequalities and public health.

Achievements in 07/08 included:

The Kent Apprenticeship scheme within Kent County Council – Kent Success - has exceeded all expectations in regards to radical change and improvements in workforce development procedures and protocols.

The Kent Community Programme has also proved a real success in the last year particularly in the very positive engagement of some of the most disengaged and marginalised young people across the County. Participation and achievement rates in excess of 75% for young offenders, young people in the care system and previously excluded pupils has been a real strength and dramatically changed many young peoples lives and aspirations for the future.

SIP has been working on a number of initiatives to try and combat the issue of worklessness in some of our most disadvantaged communities.

We have worked with our partners to deliver a range of services for people who are furthest away from the labour market and supported them to help themselves back into full-time employment. Over 200 people with complex needs have been helped in this way over the last two years, either into work or supported to take significant steps back towards meaningful, progressive employment.

Other successful initiatives have included:

1. Positive engagement with DWP, Local Government Association and NGLN to explore national policy on welfare reform and the opportunity for Kent to raise impact on individuals suggest freedoms and flexibilities that Kent require for radical local request would welcome to really drive the change and improvements on improvements to local challenges.
2. Launching Slivers-of-Time in March 08
3. Ongoing delivery and involvement with Kent Agreement 1 target 15 and PSA 2 target with long term Incapacity Benefit Claimants
4. Working with RBLI, KASS and other partners to bring about substantial results through Pathways to Work programme
5. SIP highlighted as a national model of excellent practice and strategy in the recent NGLN publication NLGN "The Local Journey to Work..Localism, welfare and worklessness" 2008 highlighting the wide range of welfare reform innovation and strategy managed by SIP across Kent.
6. High level discussions and engagement with government departments to tackle the challenges and barriers encountered with the delivery of effective welfare reform initiatives. These include :- LGA work on devolution of welfare reform to Local Authorities ; Data sharing ; local freedoms and flexibilities.

The key developments and actions for 08/09 are:

Project or development	Outcomes planned for 2008/09
Welfare Reform - Kent's priorities and strategic focus	KA2 target agreed Local employment partnerships linked to LSP'S Kent Employer Engagement Strategy Employer engagement conference
Intensive archetype and marginalised groups sessions	Develop and deliver very focused training and review sessions /residential with end users and professionals
Develop use of data and analysis	Develop an enhanced method of data collation, analysis and communication strategy with SPAIT
High level targeted geographical focus in SIP wards.	Review, and evaluation of 3 target areas...Thanet, Swale and Folkestone Targeted Action plan for each area with measurable outcomes to tackle deprivation and poverty
Protocols for procurement and commissioning	Work with Corporate finance team KCC to identify areas of development to improve and enhance the local commitment to all areas of procurement
Social enterprise initiatives	Explore potential for a range of inspirational social enterprise models
Develop a formal approach to SIP and Economic Regeneration Directorate activities and vision	Develop a process of closer working and synergy between the two units to ensure effective regeneration focused on economic and social priorities
Health authority and SIP focused approach	Explore areas of joint activity and focus particularly in relationship to tackle challenges of worklessness and GP support (both identified as govt priorities)
Communication strategy	Improve all aspects of SIP communication strategy with greater focus on areas of success, outcomes and positive trends. Review all aspects of internal and external communication opportunities including , users, communities, members, partner agencies, govt agencies and international links