

# ACTION FOR WILTSHIRE



## Wiltshire Assembly bulletin – March/April 2010

The Action for Wiltshire group was formed following a report to the Wiltshire Assembly in March 2009 that looked at the effects of the recession across the county. The report can be found [here](#)

### What is Action for Wiltshire?

Action for Wiltshire is the people, businesses and communities of Wiltshire working together to tackle the effects of the recession in the county; and to prepare for the economic recovery, building a sustainable future for the county.

## New this period ...

### The Wiltshire Finance Initiative

#### Frederick's Wiltshire

Frederick's Wiltshire looks to provide access to small loans to viable businesses denied access to credit by the mainstream banking system. The project will be launched on 29th April at STEAM in Swindon and will be followed by a Wiltshire based event in June. The first meeting of the Wiltshire Advisory Board took place on 16th April and two loans officers are already in post at the Fredericks Foundation and working on enquiries that have come through the Fredericks prior to any marketing activity having taken place.

#### Growth fund

Work has continued to secure funding to support small loans to individuals denied access to credit by the mainstream banking system. Delivery is also aligned to build the capacity of a single credit union in Wiltshire. Final confirmation of funding from the DWP is currently in progress.

**Coming up ...**

**Move on Event**

As a part of the Future Jobs Fund, a Move on Event will be held in May. All current FJF employees and employers will be invited to the event and the aim is to help facilitate all current FJF employees into finding a sustainable job.

## **Progress on other projects ...**

### **The 'potential' programme for young people**

The 'potential' programme aims to provide a coherent range of options for young people in Wiltshire, be that in employment, education or training. As we move out of recession, businesses will grow at a fast moving rate and they will need young people with skills and Wiltshire will be prepared for this due to these initiatives that are being taken now, a positive move for the county.

### **Future Jobs Fund**

We are approaching the end of the first tranche of the Wiltshire Potential Future Jobs Fund, in which we aimed to create 180 jobs. We have met our job creation target and by early April 157 young people have found work through the programme with an additional 14 receiving job offers and awaiting job starts. We hope to have successfully recruited to the remaining positions by the end of April.

Not only is Wiltshire Council leading this successful partnership programme aimed at addressing worklessness amongst 18-24 year olds in our communities but the Council itself has to date recruited 33 young people who were previously long term unemployed to jobs it has created through the Future Jobs Fund and is providing many more opportunities in the months ahead.

It is pleasing to note that we are beginning to hear of good news stories whereby young people engaged in the programme are securing onward employment opportunities ahead of the end of their initial employment term. As the first few Wiltshire Future Jobs Fund participants are approaching the end of their initial contracts later this month it is evident that the new skills and experience they have gained not to mention their increased confidence and self-esteem are positioning them well to compete in the labour market.

Young people approaching the end of their Future Jobs Fund employment terms are being supported with a 1 day comprehensive job search seminar arranged by Wiltshire Council and facilitated by North Wessex Training. Job Centre Plus are also providing a job matching service locally making contact with the employees as they reach month five of their 6 month employment term.

### **Wiltshire business in crisis helpline**

This project has now closed however Business Link will continue to signpost or support any future enquiries that come through to them through their mainstream support structure. Business Link Helpline 0845 600 9006

### **CAB advice line**

The Wiltshire advice line continues to receive high volumes of calls from clients throughout Wiltshire. Since opening the telephone lines we have now answered calls from 9,900 clients and consistently receive over 100 calls to the advice line each day. 76% of all callers are dealt with at the first point of contact leaving the remaining 2,400 being referred to the individual bureaux for a face to face interview or a more in depth telephone interview.

The main area of enquiry relates to debt (28%), with credit and store card issues being the most common issue raised which accounted for 19% of all the debt issues. Benefits accounts for 24% of all enquiries and the main issues raised related to housing and council tax benefits, which combined accounted for 26% of all the benefits issues. Advice line 08443 752775.

### **Benefit take-up campaign**

The team have now been in place since the 1<sup>st</sup> of March and a total of 83 clients have been interviewed and of this number 34 clients will receive additional benefits totalling £130,000, in addition there is work in progress where we are awaiting the outcome of a decision and also we have clients that are waiting to attend appeal tribunals, where a member of the team will represent the client.

The majority of the referrals are coming from Wiltshire advice line and as a result we are dealing with clients via the telephone, although the team are regularly interviewing clients at the bureaux throughout Wiltshire. In addition we have also carried out 3 home visits to clients who were unable to get into one of our offices.



**The future - Out of recession and in to a strong recovery**

The next top priority for the Action for Wiltshire programme is to support the research looking at what Wiltshire needs to recover strongly from the recession and to create a sustainable future.

**Who to contact**

If you would like further information about the Action for Wiltshire programme or if you have any questions or comments please email [ActionforWiltshirePMO@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:ActionforWiltshirePMO@wiltshire.gov.uk)