



# Commissioning case study

Hastings Into Work Partnership

# The headlines

- The Into Work Partnership is aiming to influence local public spending in order to tackle local unemployment using social enterprise intermediate labour market models.
- The Into Work Partnership will be a community interest company, with public sector and delivery organisations working together to provide a vehicle through which local unemployed people can influence the design of local employability programmes and support services.
- New innovative approaches can be regarded as risky ventures for organisations who sometimes find it easier to say no than to invest time in a new process or structure. Those leading the Into Work Partnership have worked hard to secure commitment from partners by clearly articulating the benefits of a new collaborative approach to improve local employment outcomes.

# What is the context?

Hastings is a town and borough in the county of East Sussex on the south coast of England. The town is located 53 miles south east of London and has an estimated population of 86,900. Hastings was ranked third in a list of the most impoverished larger coastal towns in the UK by the Office for National Statistics in August 2013. It comprises 16 wards with the highest levels of unemployment being found in the wards of Gensing, Central St Leonards and Castle.

Hastings lies in the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and redevelopment of the area is partly hampered by the fact that the administration of the combined Hastings and Bexhill economic region is split between Hastings and Rother district councils. There is limited space for further large-scale housing and employment growth within the designated boundaries of Hastings.

There is a lack of employment opportunities in the local economy and this has created a highly competitive job market, often meaning that job opportunities are

not accessible to those furthest from the job market. This restricted economy is caused by:

- poor travel routes from key transport and population hubs, which deters large companies from investing in Hastings;
- low qualification levels of the local population that can deter companies from relocating in Hastings;
- low levels of disposable income which has created a restricted economy with limited growth of local businesses and lack of suitable employment opportunities for disadvantaged beneficiaries in a highly competitive jobs market; and
- employers experiencing recruitment issues as job opportunities are not being easily filled by local residents

The area has received successive area-based funding awards to support regeneration but many of these schemes have focused on physical infrastructure investment with less attention directed towards schemes designed to improve social mobility and promote inclusion. The relatively short-term nature of previous funding allocations failed to deliver any meaningful legacy for the local community, in particular with regards to jobs and training opportunities. In addition the changing nature of employability services has created challenges for local people wishing to gain access to support and move into employment.

The Department for Work and Pensions is keen to explore ways of preventing long-term unemployment, through focusing funding resources on young people at risk of becoming not in employment, education or training from the age of 14 years upwards. This is with a view to changing attitudes and behaviours earlier on in life, thereby reducing unemployment rates and the number of benefit claimants in the future.

Funding from government and other sources to support infrastructure investment and buildings in the town is generating employment opportunities. Improvements to the A27 trunk road will also support local job growth, business investment and economic expansion. However partners recognised a need to improve the effectiveness of local support services to ensure that local people were able to take advantage of the employment opportunities created by investment in such infrastructure schemes. In addition partners identified a need to provide a stronger voice for unemployed local people to ensure that local services were adequately and effectively meeting their needs for employment support.

## What commissioning and delivery model has been adopted?

Local service providers and statutory authorities have been affected by a large reduction in government funding and a change of focus towards national prime contracting arrangements. This has led to a decline in localised funding streams to tackle unemployment, and change in local service provision, which has created confusion for both referral channels and beneficiaries. Funding opportunities now come in considerably larger packages and it requires coordination, capacity building, scalability and partnerships to be created in the local area in readiness to access this type of funding.

There was therefore an identified need for partners to work more effectively together to bid for and secure funding to improve employment outcomes for local people and in particular to tackle youth unemployment. In response the Into Work Partnership is being formed as a new collaborative multi-sector partnership aiming to tackle unemployment in the town.

One objective of the partnership is to grow the number of intermediate labour market schemes available in Hastings to ensure that local people are able to gain access to fixed-term work placements and receive support to progress into sustainable employment. A second objective is to build the capacity and effectiveness of support providers and ensure that they meet the needs of local people. The longer-term goal of the partnership is to establish a network of social enterprises providing both intermediate labour market schemes and support provider functions.

The key strands of the Into Work Partnership include:

- involving the community in designing solutions;
- capacity building among existing support providers and plugging identified gaps;
- helping existing intermediate labour market schemes to grow and new schemes to start up;
- measuring impact and value for money in tackling local unemployment and reducing public spending;
- establishing appropriate partnership governance structures; and
- funding investment and sustainability

The Into Work Partnership received funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government's Our Place programme, which aimed to give people more power over local services and budgets in their neighbourhoods and to support efforts to align these with all the other resources that the community can bring.

## Who are the key partners?

- Hastings Borough Council;
- East Sussex County Council;
- Sussex Coast College;
- Amicus Horizon;
- Orbit Group;
- Let's Do Business Group; and
- Hastings Voluntary Action

## What has been the impact?

The Our Place programme has facilitated the process of building the Into Work Partnership and involving the local community through a series of events and activities which have shaped the design of local support services. This process of community engagement and co-design will ensure that the intermediate labour market schemes and support provider functions better meet the needs of local people seeking to move into employment.

The establishment of the Into Work Partnership will create local infrastructure that is able to identify and secure investment from a range of sources including social impact bonds, the Impact Readiness Fund which is managed by the Social Investment Business on behalf of the Cabinet Office, and the Community-Led Local Development programme which is one of the European Social Fund investment priorities and aims to enable communities to deliver projects that are responsive to an area's needs and to improve strategic local development.

The measures of success for the Into Work Partnership are:

- new funding leveraged into the area to tackle unemployment;
- community-led organisations becoming contract-ready and securing contracts;
- needs of unemployed residents met based on survey findings;
- the number of unemployed people supported to improve their motivation, confidence, skills and qualification levels; and
- reduction in overall unemployment rates

The Into Work Partnership is scheduled to commence delivery from April 2015. The partnership is finalising the projected cost benefits for the Into Work Partnership over the first five years of operation based on increased employment and improving skills within young people currently not in education, employment or training. The forecasted benefits include fiscal benefits of around £3.5 million from increased employment and skills.

## What have been the key elements of success?

- building the partnership takes time and it is important to invest capacity in hosting both partnership meetings but also one-to-one meetings with individual partners to discuss specific issues or concerns that they may be unwilling to divulge in an open forum; and
- the enablers that provided support as part of the Our Place programme were effective in facilitating access to senior leaders within partner organisations and created a mechanism for introducing the Into Work Partnership and securing their support

## What has been learnt?

The process of establishing and developing the partnership took considerable capacity and much longer than initially envisaged. Each partner organisation has different governance and decision-making structures and it is important to recognise and take account of these in the development process. Securing agreement from local authorities to come on board requires a business case and briefing papers to be provided to elected members. The cycle of cabinet meetings and process of securing an agenda spot pushed back the timeline for obtaining formal commitment by several months.

It is important to invest time in developing a shared language across the partnership. Each partner has its own jargon and there is a danger that without effective management partners may become confused or disengaged.

Some partners may express an initial interest but prefer to adopt a passive role to see how the social enterprise and partnership evolves before fully committing to becoming involved. As such it is prudent to build sufficient flexibility into the partnership to enable the future sign-up and engagement of organisations that are not able or willing to commit initially.

New innovative approaches can be regarded as risky ventures for some organisations who can find it easier to say no than to invest time in a new process or structure. It is important to spend time working with them to persuade them of the benefits of a new approach and to demonstrate the shared benefits of a stronger, collaborative way of working that better meets local needs

## Who can I contact?

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## Other useful information

<http://hastingsworks.com/>

<http://intoworkpartnership.com>

A video providing further detail on the intermediate labour market model proposed by the Into Work Partnership can be accessed at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pb4nqp8atAM>