

Item 4

Work Programme and skills

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

The LGA is lobbying government for a role for councils in commissioning the new Work Programme. Officers will provide a further oral update at the meeting covering recent events.

In order to support lobbying work in this area, the LGA have produced a case study publication, *Councils' role in tackling unemployment: stories from around England*.

Recommendation(s)

- Members are invited to comment on and endorse the key lines and focus of the document, which is circulated with these papers;
- Members are invited to suggest key messages for the Chairman's meeting with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.

Action

- Officers to reflect members comments in the published document and the LG Group Chairman's briefing.

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Background

1. The government is developing a new Work Programme. It will apply to all claimants regardless of the benefit they receive and be in part funded by private sector capital on the basis that payments will be made for getting people into work (job outcomes).
2. The LGA is lobbying government for a role for councils in commissioning the new Work Programme. The LGA's lobbying on place-based budgets has also identified employment support as a key component of the economic budgets that would form part of a place-based budget.
3. Ministers do not currently see a local government role in commissioning the Work Programme, although councils could commission services themselves using their own resources through the DWP Framework Agreements.

Councils' role in tackling unemployment

4. At the July meeting of the Regeneration and Transport Board, members felt that there was there was a contradiction between civil servants' stated interest in working in partnership with local government, the government's policy on developing local enterprise partnerships and the proposed centralised commissioning model for the Work Programme. Members also agreed that a national solution to employment support that did not take account of variation between local labour markets would cost more and would be likely to achieve less.
5. In order to support lobbying work in this area, the LGA have produced a case study publication, *Councils' role in tackling unemployment: stories from around England*. Due to the length of the draft document it is not reproduced in the formal papers, but has been circulated electronically with them.
6. Members are invited to comment on and endorse the key lines and focus of the document, in particular the opening statement and introduction. As the case study text must be agreed with contributing authorities, members are requested to focus their comments on substantive issues.

Next steps

7. Officers will update the board on recent developments and meetings, including conversations with Work Programme contractors.

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8. Officers will reflect members comments in the published version of *Councils' role in tackling unemployment*, which will be cleared by lead members in the usual manner.
9. Baroness Eaton, LG Group Chairman, will meet Ian Duncan-Smith MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in the Autumn. **Members are invited to suggest key messages for this meeting**, which officers will reflect in the Chairman's briefing.

Financial Implications

10. None arising. The cost of publication will be met from existing resources.