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SEMLEP Social Inclusion Strategy

The South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) Social Inclusion Strategy underpins the priorities identified in SEMLEP's strategic documents such as the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) and cuts across the SEMLEP's business plan and initiatives. This document will set out the over-arching priorities which represent a journey to delivery and by working through partnership enable funding support to be targeted at a local level.

SEMLEP has a strong commitment to tackle economic inequalities, promote social inclusion and encourage partnership working across the 'patch' and will strive to work with neighbouring local enterprise partnerships to promote cross border initiatives over all sectors. The VCSE sector is facing a changing landscape, grants and service level agreements are declining and contract service delivery is becoming the norm. This means that there will be a need for collaboration, consortia and partnership delivery. In order to achieve this SEMLEP will work with businesses, providers and individuals to ensure that the duties of the UK Equality Act 2010 are understood and implemented by all in the design, commissioning, delivery and evaluation of our programmes and projects. We will also work with public sector commissioners and procurers to ensure that our programmes comply with the UK Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 which recognises that 'local' VCSE's are better placed to deliver services to communities.

As a consequence of extensive consultation 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**

These aspirations will assist SEMLEP to:

Raise aspirations and ambitions – providing a range of economic opportunities across all sectors including lifelong learning and re-training. This will encourage the development of alternative ways of accessing employment such as apprenticeships, volunteering or work-based training.

Promote and support businesses – to ensure sustainable economic growth across urban and rural areas; to align local job opportunities and skills with employer needs encompassing related issues such as transport to work, childcare needs, facilities and services.

Develop a strong and sustainable network – to train and up-skill individuals and businesses in financial literacy and management, and encourage partnership working.



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This document sets out:

- why these priorities have been identified
- suggestions on the type of activities SEMLEP may want to encourage

in addition there are two Annexes to the strategy

- Annex A contains the evidence base to support the strategic objectives
- Annex B provides case studies on projects from across SEMLEP that support the key areas for intervention

SEMLEP has identified the initial target areas for this programme;

- Luton
- Corby
- Bedford
- Central Bedfordshire
- Northampton

Our main reasons for choosing these areas were that most were deprived communities with low skills attainment and a low skills base (particularly Corby; higher than average JSA 16-24 levels and out of work benefits. In relation to Central Beds the issue is access to transport being a major barrier and its impact on young people, older people, disabled people, women returners etc. Annex A, provides more detailed data to underpin these priority areas. However, it should be stressed that these are the initial target areas and are subject to change and/or expansion over the duration of the European Programme.

Worklessness - Overcoming Barriers

The Why?

Worklessness continues to be an issue across the South East Midlands area, and since June 2008 the number of people who are not employed has continued to rise to 278,000 people of working age or 25.9% in June 2013.

A European reference publication "The European Social Fund at Work" says that:

"Someone in a job is less at risk of poverty and more engaged with society. However the job market is not a level playing field. Getting work can be harder for some social groups and individuals. Whether because of ethnic origin, education, disability or age – a number of people find the job market closed to them. The challenging economic climate just amplifies the problem".....

"Drug and alcohol abuse, inability to speak the local language, homelessness, poor healthcare, debt or limited access to education keeps people marginalised. Racism and discrimination also prevent people from playing an active role in our society"

The South East Midlands remains below the national worklessness rate for England which is 28.7%. At the same time the number of people who are economically inactive and do not want a job has fallen steadily by 4,300 people to 166,700, whereas the number of people economically inactive but



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who do want a job has increased by 1,700 to 22.3%. There are many factors for being economically inactive and not looking for work - one is looking after the family / home which accounted for 29.2% of the population in June 2013. To demonstrate this in a local context according to the *Central Bedfordshire Quarterly Economic Monitoring Report (Feb 14)* the figure for not working and not currently looking for a job is only 20%.

Data also shows that in May 2013, there were 125,820 or 11.3% of people of working age (16-64) claiming benefit in the South East Midlands. The rate is higher than nationally in some areas like Corby (13.8%), Luton (11.7%) and Northampton (11.2%) whereas others are relatively low such as South Northampton (4.5%).

The percentage of South East Midlands working age population claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) remains below the England average. In September 2013, 2.6% of working age population in the South East Midlands claimed JSA compared to an England average of 3.1%. The rate of claimant count (16-24) varies across the South East Midlands from 6.7% in Corby to 2.2% in South Northamptonshire. Youth unemployment remains an issue for the South East Midlands with areas such as Corby at 6.7% of 16-24 year olds claiming Job Seekers Allowance. In fact young people between 16-24 years old represented 23.7% of all South East Midlands residents claiming Job Seekers Allowance in September 2013.

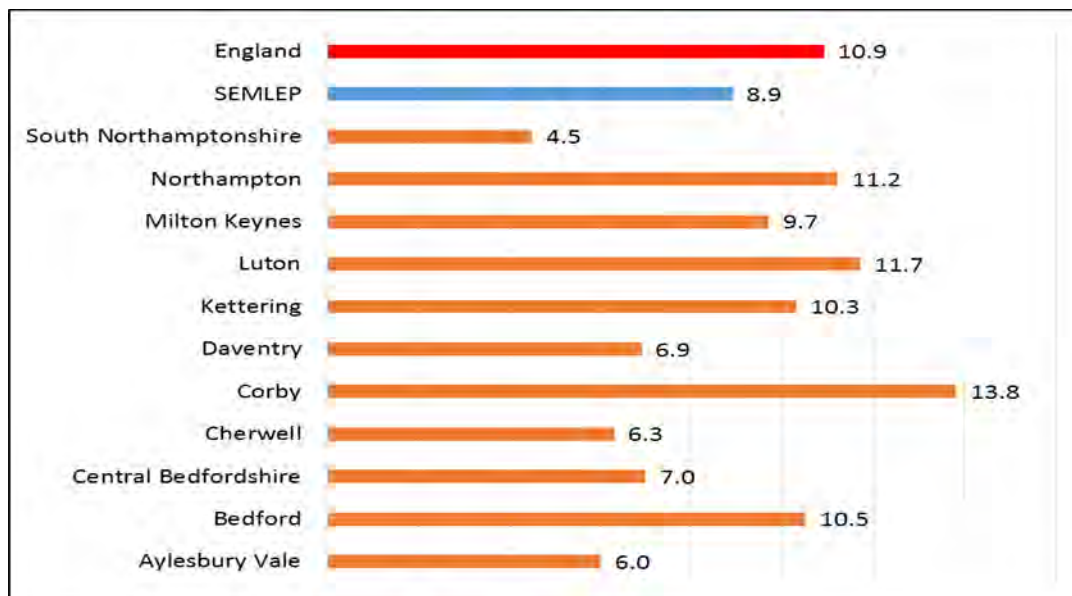
Some groups also experience lower employment rates and face a number of barriers to the labour market. This includes ethnic minority females, disabled people, young people and people over 50. For example the employment rate of disabled people in the South East Midlands was almost half of the total employment rate in June 2013 at 39% compared to 75.1%. Men in South East Midlands are almost twice more likely to work in higher skilled occupations than women. In June 2013 65.5% of males employed worked in higher skilled occupations compared to 39.3% of females.

Key barriers into work can include one or more of the following:

- Discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or pregnancy/maternity identified as protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010; however this list is not exhaustive
- lack of opportunity for vulnerable people with "chaotic lifestyles"
- lack of up-to-date, relevant skills;
- the expense of updating skills including digital inclusion;
- lack of Internet hardware/software access at home;
- lack of consistency with advisors and tutors concerning work readiness and career development;
- transport issues including affordable transport particularly in rural areas;
- lack of relevant work experience;
- fear or perception of being worse off 'in work' than on benefits;
- availability of employment that fits around child care/carer needs;
- availability of affordable childcare
- lack of flexibility from employers



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Source: Department for Work and Pensions, Benefits via nomisweb, May 2013

Graph 1: Proportion of resident population (16-64) claiming out of work benefits, May 2013

Key Areas for Intervention

- Tailored support for all ages (16 to 70) to help people move closer to employment by offering
 - Basic & vocational skills
 - Employment support measures, including career planning, help with writing CVs and job applications, job search, access to further education, training and affordable transport
 - Employer engagement and awareness training to encourage best practice
 - Addressing discrimination and inequalities
 - Provide pre and in work support
- Support for families by improving intervention and equitable services
- Bespoke programmes of support to address complex needs of those furthest from the labour market
- Promote and encourage the development of lifelong career pathways through various initiatives for example work clubs, volunteering, work placements and mentoring
- Encourage closer cooperation between schools, career services and employers to ensure local needs are met



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Financial Inclusion – Tackling Poverty

The Why?

Pockets of deprivation exist across SEMLEP, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010 data for the whole of the South East Midlands area shows that there are 194,800 people who live in an area identified as the 20% most deprived in England. This represents an average of 11.3% of the total population, though Corby shows 30% whilst other areas statistically appear to have no areas of deprivation. Income deprivation can be shown more generally by looking at child poverty across the local authorities within SEMLEP.

Local Authority	Estimated number of children in poverty 2012	Estimated percentage of children in poverty 2012
Luton	14460	27%
Milton Keynes	13591	22%
Bedford	7176	20%
Northampton	9068	18%
Corby	2595	18%
Cherwell	4572	14%
Central Bedfordshire	7695	13%
Kettering	2761	13%
Aylesbury Vale	4896	12%
Daventry	1675	9%
South Northamptonshire		Below 5%

Table 1: Source <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk>.

Despite the appearance of prosperity, in relation to the above graph, South Northamptonshire faces challenges in particular participation in their job clubs and money advice services remains high with people either out of work, at risk of redundancy or facing difficult financial times. South Northamptonshire Council's support through job clubs and job match services has helped deliver the highest employment rate in the UK. The district also experiences the side effects of out commuting with increasingly dormant market towns and rural communities.

An emerging issue relating to financial exclusion is the impact of benefits reform on disadvantaged groups, particularly disabled people, lone parents, migrant communities and certain ethnic minority groups. Those working in low paid jobs can also be adversely affected by the impact of welfare reform. Early analysis of the welfare reforms highlights that the estimated impact of the reforms across Great Britain as a whole will reduce public sector spending by almost £19bn a year. This represents around an average loss of £470 a year for every adult of working age in the country. For example in Central Bedfordshire, the estimated average loss per working age person would be £340 (£56 million in total). (Source: Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University, *Hitting the poorest places hardest: the local and regional impact of welfare reform, April 2013*).



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According to a major food bank provider the Trussell Trust, the number of households using food banks has more than trebled in the last twelve months. They cite rises in the cost of living, static incomes, the cap on benefits and the continuing economic downturn as the reasons behind this surge in demand. (*Source: Trussell Trust, 2013*). The rise of complementary systems of exchange such as local energy transfer schemes (LETS), Time Banks and Street Banks is further demonstration of innovation and the drive for social inclusion initiatives.

Key Areas for Intervention

- Providing access to financial capability training and money management advice
- Capacity building to ensure that organisations are business ready
- Support for individuals to provide opportunities to up skill and access to mentoring for those in low paid jobs so that they can earn a better wage
- Advice and support to aid accessing the labour market (cost of transport and childcare) focusing on tackling in work poverty
- Promote digital inclusion initiatives enabling people to access services, job opportunities and training on line

Community Investment – Promoting and supporting sustainable, inclusive economic development

The Why?

As highlighted in the SEP, a key priority across urban and rural communities is to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is in place to unlock new housing initiatives, support new and existing businesses; create jobs and ensure that the skills requirements of local employers are met, thereby increasing prosperity through a holistic approach.

Our objective is to tackle social and economic exclusion through coordinated interventions to stimulate enterprise including social enterprise (SE) & raise the quality, standard, number and profile of social enterprise in the South East Midlands. These interventions will build the growth capacity of SMEs strengthening leadership and management and further develop the UK's entrepreneurs. This will not only drive growth and jobs but be a way of bringing those at risk of social exclusion into the labour market. The anticipated target beneficiaries could include pre and start-up businesses, young people, NEETs, women, 50 plus, social enterprise and voluntary & not for profit/charity sector, rural based entrepreneurs and enterprises.

Key barriers to sustainable economic growth are:

- access to finance
- shortage of suitable business premises
- restricted access to services
- lack of broadband and associated services within certain areas
- affordability and availability of housing
- high levels of reliance on seasonal and low paid work
- miss-match of skills between employers and the work force
- lack of business support for small and micro businesses
- lack of social and community infrastructure in new housing initiatives



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- appropriate transport to access work

Key Areas for Intervention

- Encouraging corporate social investment including pro bono business support to pre-start-ups, start up and social enterprises (e.g. skills support or a “bank” of board members, expanding on corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives) thereby ensuring tangible outputs and outcomes
- Developing the capacity of local businesses, VCS organisations and social enterprises to maximise local procurement opportunities.
- Support VCS and Social Enterprises in target areas to reduce isolation through their business activities
- Encourage people development through accredited training and use of qualifications to support start up SEs
- Promote volunteering as a route into work and an opportunity for career development/change