

West Somerset Opportunity Area

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Cabinet Member: Frances Nicholson; Children's and Families

Division and Local Member: Cllr Mandy Chilcott – Minehead; Cllr Hugh Davies –

Watchet and Stogursey; Cllr Frances Nicholson - Dulverton and Exmoor and

Cllr Christine Lawrence - Dunster

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Education Secretary, Justine Greening, plans to raise education standards and broaden the horizons of young people in areas struggling with social mobility. The Opportunity Area Programme is a key part of the Education Secretary's priority of tackling social mobility and improving opportunities for young people across the country. Twelve areas with both poor social mobility and schools that face challenges will receive a share of £72 million to boost opportunities for young people in these communities.
- 1.2. The twelve opportunity area are Blackpool, Bradford, Derby, Doncaster, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, Hastings, Ipswich, North Yorkshire Coast, Norwich, Oldham, Stoke on Trent and West Somerset. The areas chosen were amongst the weakest in both the 2016 Social Mobility Commission's index and the Department for Education's data on school standards and capacity to improve.
- 1.3. West Somerset was 324th out of 324 Council areas in the social mobility index.
- 1.4. The plan published on the 9th of October 2017 by the Department for Education (DfE) works across business, education and community to create and maintain more opportunity for our young people. It is important that this is a community wide initiative supported by Early years providers, Schools, Colleges, Businesses, The Voluntary Sector, Health, Council services, and most importantly young people and their families.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1. Members are asked to consider and comment on the West Somerset Opportunity Area plan prepared by the DfE.

3. Background

- 3.1. West Somerset was identified as area 324 out of 324 social mobility areas due to a combination of factors. Having looked at the issues facing West Somerset the DfE and partners have identified four priorities:

Priority 1: Every child has a great start in life

Children in West Somerset will begin school with a strong start, with the proportion achieving a good level of development rising to above the current national average.

Priority 2: Educational excellence in the classroom

Every child in West Somerset will begin school with a strong start having achieved a good level of development at the end of the Early years Foundation Stage.

Priority 3: Transition to adulthood

Every young person in West Somerset will be inspired to achieve the best possible education outcomes after the age of sixteen. We will prioritise the access of disadvantaged young people into higher education and high level technical routes at the same rate as in the top half of England.

Priority 4: Skills for employment and business

Every young person in West Somerset should be equipped to succeed in the world of work, which is why we will ensure that every school pupil in West Somerset gets four excellent experiences of work and will invest in adult skills.

The plan is a summary of the 2016 position, what activities will be undertaken and the targets for 2020/21. Somerset County Council will report the progress of the Opportunity Area through the Children's Trust plan.

3.2. The DFE are working with the following schools:

Dulverton All Saints CofE First School, Crowcombe Primary School, Cutcombe CofE First School, Danesfield CofE School, Dulverton Junior School, Dunster First School, Exford CofE First School, Knights Templar CofE/Methodist Community School, Minehead First School, Minehead Middle School, Old Cleeve CofE First School, St Dubricius CofE First School, St Michael's CofE First School, St Peter's CofE First School, Stogumber Primary School, Timberscombe CofE First School and The West Somerset Community College.

The opportunities will also be made available to eligible pupils who live in the area and attend Kingsmead School, Haygrove School, Richard Huish College and Taunton and Bridgwater College.

3.3. The Programme is led by the Department for Education and advised by Local Independent partnership board . The West Somerset Opportunity Board is chaired by Dr Fiona McMillan OBE, and has the following members: Alison Bell from Somerset Public Health, Andy Berry from Bridgwater and Taunton college, Chris Garcia from the Heart of the South West LEP, Corrine Matthews from West Somerset Economic Development, Frances Nicholson from Somerset County Council, Jim Whittaker from Chanel Group, Julian Wooster from Somerset County Council, Mandy Chilcott from West Somerset District Council, Marcus Capel from Cutcome and Timberscombe First schools, Mel Roberts from Somerset County Council, Naomi Griffith from the Onion Collective Community Development, Paul Rushforth from the West Somerset Academies Trust, Peter Elliott from the Bridgwater College Academy Trust and Tom Thayer from EDF Energy.

The aim of the work is to boost attainment from the early years of a child's education right through to university.

3.4. Funding

Somerset County Council will receive a grant allocation based on the plans submitted for each of the priorities and agreed by the DfE. The Council is expected to follow its procurement rules.

In addition to the Opportunity area funding West Somerset is now a priority for other central government initiatives including:

- Working with local 'cornerstone' employers to provide young people with experience of the world of work. These include EDF Energy, and this work is being led by the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) to create programmes for young people aged 11 to 18 that raise their career aspirations.
- Providing young people with at least four inspiring 'encounters' with the world of work, for example through work experience or mentoring.
- A new Essential Life Skills programme, to help disadvantaged young people have access to the same opportunities as those in the top-performing schools. The aim is to help them develop wider skills such as resilience, emotional wellbeing and employability. The programme will complement the individual Opportunity Area plans by providing extra-curricular activities, such as sports, volunteering and social action projects, which give pupils the opportunity to develop leadership skills.
- The Education Endowment Foundation will also support schools in Opportunity Areas to improve outcomes for young people, particularly those from disadvantaged homes, by sharing best teaching practice. The DfE expect all interventions to be evidence based. The opportunity will be working with the Blue School in Wells.
- The National Citizen Service (NCS) is working to help young people benefit from a programme of personal development and volunteering. The National Citizen Service brings young people together, boostings confidence and leadership, well-being and young peoples' ability to succeed in later life. Young people become involved in social action in their communities volunteering.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1.** The DfE have worked with Somerset County Council, West Somerset District Council, early year's providers, schools, colleges, employers, the voluntary sector, and the LEP to draw together plans for the West Somerset Opportunity Area.
- 4.2.** The DfE have committed to making sure that young people are at the heart of the work. The DfE will be consulting with young people building on research already commissioned from the Somerset Rural Youth Project which will examines the experiences and expectations of young people living in rural parts of West Somerset along with on line pulse surveys.
The DfE will be working with the Somerset Youth Parliament, setting up a young people's reference group and creating ambassadors for the programme. The ambassadors will be 10 to 20 years old and will consult with their peers, letting success stories and delivering the communication strategy to engage the wider

community.

5. Implications

- 5.1.** The activities within the plan will be funded by the DfE through a grant to Somerset County Council. The grant will be held by Somerset County Council and subject to Somerset County Council procurement rules. Somerset County Council will report to the DfE.
- 5.2.** Each priority has a number of targets which the opportunity area has to achieve to improve outcomes for all learners.

6. Background papers

- 6.** The West Somerset Opportunity plan can be found at:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/650231/Social_Mobility_Delivery_Plan_West_Somerset.pdf

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author