



# global slowdown: local solutions II

councils helping people and businesses

# foreword

When the first *global slowdown: local solution* case studies were published at the beginning of November last year, the impacts of the recession (or slowdown as it was at that point) were just beginning to make themselves felt. But the wide range of examples that featured in that report showed that councils were already intervening to support local people and businesses affected by the credit crunch and the economic downturn.

I said at that time that it was clear that the slowdown is going to hit different places in different ways and that our response must be tailored to local circumstances. Events have shown that the recession is indeed having different impacts in different places. This collection of examples shows that councils are continuing to support local communities and firms and are increasingly turning their thoughts to making sure that their places benefit from the recovery when it comes.

Councils are uniquely placed to understand the needs of local people and businesses and to exercise local leadership in joining-up the response of local public sector. So in Walsall, the council, working in partnership with the local branch of Citizens Advice, has set up an advice desk in Walsall County Court to help people facing repossession. In Sunderland, business development, benefits and welfare rights staff from the council are working with the Regional Development Agency and the neighbouring council to tackle major job losses at Nissan.

Councils can also adapt national schemes to local circumstances. So Norfolk is adapting national redundancy support offers to meet the needs of smaller businesses. In Sutton, the borough has teamed up with Jobcentre Plus, the local Chamber of Commerce and the Citizens Advice Bureau to provide support to jobless professional people – a group not well served by current employment support schemes.

Innovation is also a strong theme in this collection of case studies, with Essex creating a municipal bank to provide liquidity to local businesses and Westminster adapting an Australian scheme to help small and medium-sized businesses take on apprentices. We are also pleased to have two European case studies, particularly the example from Denmark, where local authorities will have full control for tackling worklessness in their areas from August 2009.

Finally, the forward-looking theme in this second collection is heartening. From the project in Tees Valley to prepare the ground for a new industrial future, to the work in Barnsley on young people not in employment, education and training – the

entrepreneurs and workers of the future – councils are already gearing up to make sure that local people and businesses are able to benefit from the upswing when it comes.

Most heartening of all is the fact that these case studies form only a snapshot and a small selection of the initiatives taken by town, city, district and county halls up and down the country.

*E. Margaret Eaton*

**Cllr Margaret Eaton**  
**Chairman of the Local Government Association**





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# section 1

## supporting people

### **Barnsley**

#### **Helping young people not in employment, education or training**

Barnsley council is working hard to reduce the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) in the borough. Approximately nine percent of the borough's young people fall into this category, down from 13.4 per cent in 2004.

The council has a number of initiatives to try to help this group, whose members are at an even greater disadvantage than normal as the recession reduces job opportunities.

Working with its partners - schools, colleges, work-based learning providers, Connexions, and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Barnsley council has made a range of improvements to the whole areas of advice and guidance, including setting up Ambition Barnsley, a careers fair for students in years 9, 10 and 11 of their education, to make them more aware of possibilities open to them through taster and hands-on activities.

Barnsley established at an early stage an online prospectus of opportunities for 14-19 year olds and this is now complemented by an online common application process for learners at age 14 and 16 as they make choices about future pathways.

Barnsley has developed a process which uses data as the basis for monthly meetings between the LSC and providers and Connexions partners to monitor the fit between training and employment available, and young peoples' aspirations.

This process has encouraged partners to update data continuously and to use it as a planning

tool to secure better matches between young people and available opportunities. Activities also include job clubs, open days and buddy schemes.

Some 120 employers from eight employment sectors including manufacturing, hospitality, engineering and food industries have also been involved in the Training Pays scheme to improve the links between employment and training. Employers who employ 10 or fewer people have been particularly targeted.

Meryl White, 11-19 project director at Barnsley council said: "This style of working together has been very fruitful. No one organisation in its own could have achieved these improvements and our success comes from robust partnership working."

### **Knowsley**

#### **Practical help to reduce residents' fuel bills**

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council has worked with partners to run a series of local Get Energy Smart events to raise awareness of the problems facing vulnerable people who struggle to heat their homes – including older people and families living on benefits. Financial difficulties caused by the economic downturn have exacerbated fuel poverty for many people.

The events provide residents with advice on how to keep fuel bills low while still staying warm during colder weather. Information on energy efficiency grants is available along with tips on saving energy and switching energy companies. Residents can also access support on coping with debt and receive personal advice on the benefits to which they are entitled.



Four events were held last winter, attended by more than 300 members of the public, a number of whom asked for further information on changing supplier, claiming benefits and managing debt alongside advice on energy efficiency. Similar ones are planned for next winter.

Cllr Graham Morgan, cabinet member for regeneration, economy and skills, said the economic downturn meant it was particularly important to ensure that people are aware of the help their local authority could provide.

“The Get Energy Smart events give people the chance to talk to a number of different groups all in one place, they can find out about grants and get advice on staying warm over the winter, saving money on fuel bills and what to do if they were worried about debt.”

## Stevenage

### Helping a Credit Union to serve those who would have difficulty in borrowing

Credit unions can provide a reputable source of lending to people who may be unable or unwilling to borrow from banks. Like the original building societies, they lend to members from assets that they have collectively contributed, and are legally limited to charging a 2 per cent a month interest rate. Interest is not paid on members' accounts, but surpluses are reinvested, or distributed as dividends. Unlike banks, credit unions will loan relatively small sums, a few hundred pounds perhaps, and have no arrangement fees.

One such union operates at Stevenage, where the borough council is an enthusiastic supporter and has sponsored weekly drop-in sessions at

its customer service centre, where Credit Union staff are on hand to help residents. The council pays the union's rent and council tax, and many volunteers give their time to its work.

Some 1,000 people belong to the Stevenage Credit Union and pay a £2 joining fee, though this is waived for most social housing tenants.

Council leader Sharon Taylor is herself a member and says it works hard to serve a wide range of people. She singles out its junior savings club, which encourages “young people to save so that by the time they start work they have savings and a savings habit on which to build”.

Strategic director Scott Crudgington, who is also a member, says the Credit Union can provide a much-needed service “with a minimal administration budget thanks to the use of a mainly volunteer workforce”.

## Broxtowe

### Inviting the Citizens Advice Bureau into the council offices to provide a combined service

People who need support over financial difficulty will often need help from both their local council and the Citizens Advice Bureau, and so in January 2009, the Beeston CAB re-located to the main offices of Broxtowe Borough Council. It now has a clearly signposted and easily accessible self-contained office next to the council's own reception area.

Co-location provides a more convenient service for residents who need help and support, and will make it easier for CAB and the council to work together.

The current economic climate is bringing an inevitable increase in demand for debt counselling services, and Broxtowe's decision to bring the CAB into the council building is an attempt to help meet that demand.

While the CAB will remain a separate organisation, local people will find it easier to locate it and access its services, and closer working relationships are being developed between it and the council's customer services section. This leads to more joined-up approaches to matters relating to council tax, benefits and rates.

CAB district manager, Sue Maslowska, said: "This is an excellent move for us. It places us right at the heart of the community where we can offer a seamless service for clients.

"The council has been incredibly supportive, and this move will help us to strengthen what is already an excellent relationship."

### **Erewash**

#### **Publicising advice services for those with financial problems**

Erewash Borough Council covers an area with some 110,000 residents and during the recession has brought local partner agencies together to ensure that they know how to access support on money, debt and housing.

People who face growing financial worries often do not know where to turn for help, so as Carol Hart, lead member for community, says: "We are taking every opportunity to tell our community where they can get support, advice and assistance because we know that together

we have much help on offer."

Erewash has funded a full-time advice caseworker at the local branch of Citizens Advice, who in their first six months saw 68 clients and helped them to reschedule £600,000 worth of debts.

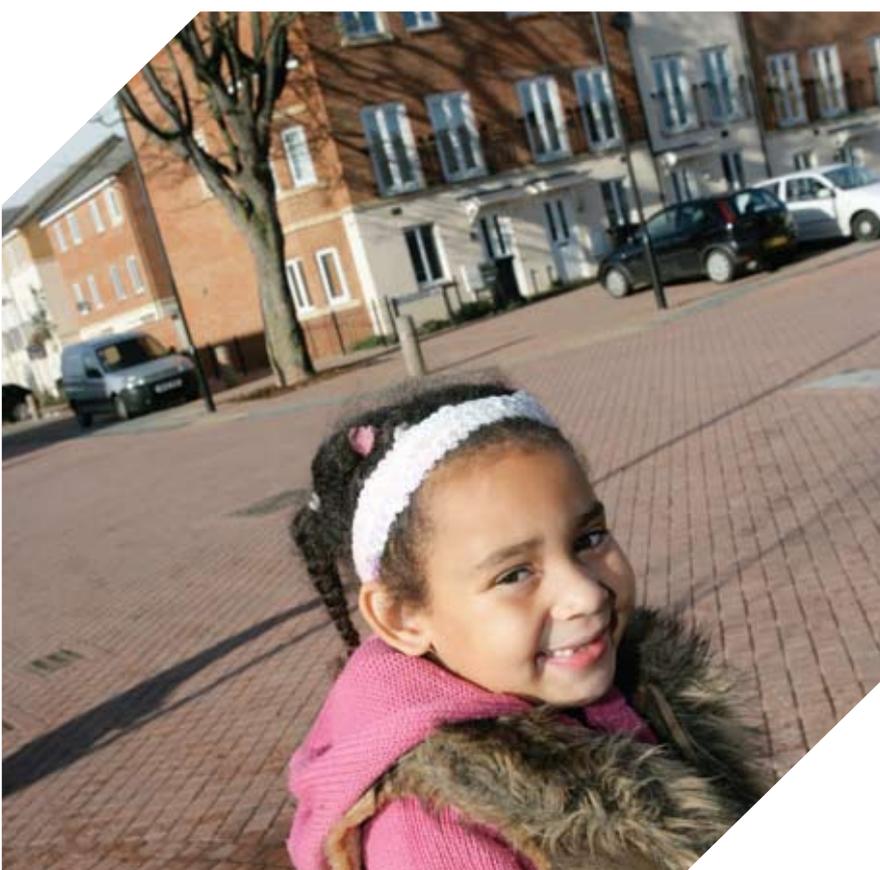
The council has used a variety of methods to promote the services on offer. For example, it ran a special 'partners day' alongside the local carnival where 70 groups came together to provide information and advice to more than 1,500 people. Another initiative has seen housing advisers visiting companies affected by redundancy to hold on-site housing surgeries.

Sara Lagoe, manager of Erewash CAB, says the credit crunch has created a much greater demand for money advice, particularly from homeowners facing a reduced income due to short-time working or redundancy. Money troubles can cause stress which affects people's health and Erewash hopes that easy access to advice will help to nip some of these problems in the bud.

### **Norwich City Council**

#### **Offering skills and jobs advice alongside help with housing.**

Norwich City Council was among 12 councils that trailblazed the enhanced housing options scheme, launched by Communities and Local Government in 2008. The idea is that housing teams provide more than just housing advice by developing support for vulnerable people through links to job and training opportunities, since people with housing problems frequently also have difficulties with work and skills. Barry Allard,



housing and worklessness project officer, says: "I think councils should not only look at someone's accommodation but their whole life situation and work issues. If we arrange accommodation but they haven't got the skills to keep it then we're not providing a long-term solution."

Under Norwich's learning, employment and accommodation project, every eligible person who approaches the housing team has an initial conversation about worklessness. If they are willing to undertake job training, they can be linked into secure accommodation through the private sector leasing scheme. Clients receive full housing benefit while in training.

LEAP saw 35 people in its first two months alone, of whom six were placed into accommodation, one into a job and 10 into work placements. Those who complete a placement receive a certificate and reference which can help them secure future employment.

Brenda Arthur, executive member for housing and adult services, says: "It is incredibly rewarding that we can help people who have, through no fault of their own, struggled to find a home and maintain their tenancy, by getting them into training and employment."

### **Bolton**

#### **Helping council tenants to pay rent and avoid financial difficulty**

The recession has seen many people get into financial difficulty through job losses or reduced income and this can affect their ability to pay their rent, which in turn leaves councils losing income as arrears increase. In Bolton, the council's arms'-length management organisation, Bolton at Home, has achieved significant reductions in rent arrears. It operates an Income Management Team that gives advice to tenants in the early stages of arrears on how to pay rent, and also helps them to claim welfare benefits and discounts.

The team's work is one of a range of measures that help Bolton to keep rent accounts clear, even during the recession. The team works closely with debt counselling and financial advice services locally, including the Citizens' Advice Bureau. In the financial year 2008-09, rent owed was just £1.73m, or less than 4 per cent of the total collectable rent.

Bolton's executive member for housing, Cllr Nick Peel, has said: "This is a great achievement and it's largely down to officers acting early to give advice and guidance to tenants in the early stage of rent arrears.

"We've gone down the preventative route and

concentrate on helping the 'can't pay' rather than the 'won't pay', which has also resulted in evictions falling."

Cllr Noel Spencer, chair of Bolton at Home, said: "Brilliant work has gone on to get arrears levels down to what they are now. Customers have engaged with us and it's been a real team effort between the partner agencies, who work together very efficiently and are improving support services all the time."

### **Liverpool**

#### **Helping people into work by putting their finance on a sound footing**

For many people, financial difficulty is a major barrier to making the transition from unemployment to work, or to keeping their jobs. Netherley, North Liverpool, Wavertree and Toxteth Citizens Advice Bureaux provide a jobs, education and training (JET) service funded by Liverpool City Council. It developed the Personal Finance and Debt Advice Project as a response to the close links between employment and personal finances, and now CAB advisers are based within each of the five JET teams, taking referrals from guidance workers and attending regular Job Cafes and other promotional events.

This advice can be invaluable in helping people from communities that have traditionally suffered from social and economic disadvantage and high levels of unemployment to take up training or job opportunities.

The CAB team provides assistance to clients to claim in-work benefits and tax credits and carries out 'better off in work calculations' to demonstrate whether a client's financial situation

would be improved by them taking a job. It also prepares appeals and helps with representation at employment tribunals, provides budgeting and debt advice, and makes referrals to other appropriate organisations, such as Credit Unions.

Between June 2008 and March 2009 the project assisted nearly 1,500 clients, collectively helping to increase their income by around £850,000, largely through additional benefits and tax credits claimed. Project workers dealt with more than £750,000 in debt; with a further £450,000 referred onto specialist debt teams in the bureaux.

### **Walsall**

#### **Help at court to avoid repossession**

One effect of the recession has been a sharp increase in the numbers of people who face repossession of their home because they cannot keep up their mortgage payments. If they cannot come to an agreement with their lender their home is at risk and they can end up in court with the prospect of eviction. Some of those affected could avoid this if they knew how to better manage their finances, and Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council has been able to hope through provision of an advice desk at Walsall County Court. This is run in a partnership with the local branch of Citizens Advice.

More than 50 households have so far been helped by desk staff to avoid repossession or eviction. Desk staff offer free legal advice and assistance on debt and money issues and a dedicated Citizens Advice member attends court and works with households on their financial circumstances, examining options and

exploring ways to increase income. Sue Byard, assistant director of strategic housing, says: "Repossession really is the last resort – Walsall council wants to do all it can to help families remain in their own homes.

"Many residents are completely unaware that orders are available that can remedy their situations and have found the Court Desk service a real lifeline during an incredibly stressful time."

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## Sunderland

### Rapid response to major job losses

When vehicle manufacturer Nissan announced up to 1,200 job losses at its Sunderland plant earlier this year, the city council went into action as part of a rapid response scheme led by One North East, the regional development agency.

Staff from the council business investment, and benefits and welfare rights teams joined in this effort to inform affected employees of both immediate help and the possibilities of alternative jobs or training. Two successful jobs fairs at the Stadium of Light saw nearly 1,000 people attend to meet employers including the city council and neighbouring South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough council, as well as a host of other public and private sector employers.

Janet Snaith, the council's head of business investment, explains: "like many regions, the north east has had to deal with redundancies during times of economic uncertainty, both recently and during the last recession. This has

equipped us with a pretty slick operation which we can put into place at short notice."

The partners involved are One North East, the council, Nissan, Jobcentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, Confederation of British Industry, Business and Enterprise North East and the regional Chamber of Commerce.

The group had a clear objective of bringing the maximum package of support to assist each and every worker affected by redundancy - both at Nissan and in its supply chain - to help them find new work or identify fresh opportunities as soon as possible.

Support and advice are available to help supply chain firms re-equip to pursue other markets.

A tracking system, for those who are willing, provides reports on the progress of redundant employees.

"Experience has shown us that where response groups have supported other major employers in large job loss situations in the recent past, that more than 80 per cent of workers on average have found new employment or are in retraining within six months of redundancies being made" Ms Snaith says.

"Tracking shows how well we are doing in this process and allows help to be concentrated in those areas where it is needed most."

The council also runs a job linkage service, with 12 staff located in shopping malls and community facilities to give advice and information.

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# section 2

## supporting businesses

### Dorset

#### Offering free expert advice to businesses

One of the toughest things for any smaller business is knowing how to find and exploit opportunities to grow. Businesses in Dorset can take advantage of Dormen - the Dorset Business Mentoring Programme – managed all of Dorset’s councils with Business Link and educational bodies, which has provided free one-to-one mentoring for 1413 businesses as the recession increases demand for this service.

Mentors are experienced professionals, who offer their time for free to businesses to diagnose problems and seek solutions. All mentors work to the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative standard for business mentors.

A wide range of businesses have benefited from Dormen. One is Linton Jenkins, owner of Full Force Boat Building of Portland. He built and repaired sailing dinghies but then developed his own projects including a patented boom fitting that removes the need for a mainsheet traveller.

Mr Jenkins is a widely-regarded boat builder, but decided he needed mentoring in running his business.

Afterwards, Mr Jenkins says: “There is much more structure to the way I approach things. Previously, because of a lack of time, I would have guessed the cost of building a boat and therefore the price would bear no relation to the actual cost of production.”

Another was Bournecoast Property Agents, where director Des Simmons felt a mentor could bring fresh perspective to a company where all the directors were related and came from similar backgrounds.

“The Dormen mentor has given good, solid support and help, and opened the family up to new ideas,” he says.

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### Essex

#### Creating a municipal bank to provide liquidity to local businesses

One of the most marked effects of this recession has been the drying-up of credit offered by banks, which has meant that otherwise healthy businesses have got into difficulties with liquidity. Essex County Council has acted to fill this gap in its area by the creation of Banking on Essex with Abbey Corporate Banking, part of the Spanish-owned Santander Group.

The UK has long lacked the kind of local banks that are common elsewhere, notably in the United States, which can lend to small and medium sized enterprises in their own communities. Banking on Essex will offer this kind of locally-focussed help. Borrowers must be based in Essex, have been in business for more than one year, employ fewer than 250 people and have a turnover below £25m.

Banking on Essex is the first major municipal bank to be created since 1915 and has an initial £30m to bring liquidity to eligible borrowers through loans and overdrafts of up to £100,000.

County council leader Lord Hanningfield says the creation of Banking on Essex would directly benefit small businesses that had struggled to secure credit and “represents a huge shift away from an over-centralised model back to a



local system responsive to the needs of local businesses and their communities”.

The scheme has been welcomed by the Essex Federation of Small Business, whose chair Iain Wicks says he expects the council bank to “provide support to those firms needing short-term financial support which cannot be obtained from their own bank, even though the business itself is viable and has a good future.”

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## Winchester

### Using LABGI to help small businesses, unemployed managers and home workers

Winchester has long been amongst the most prosperous parts of the county, but even it is not immune to the recession, and the city council has decided to devote £400,000 from its Local Authority Business Growth Incentives fund to assist local businesses.

It acted after the number of Job Seekers Allowance claimants almost doubled to 911 in the six months to January 2009, and a report from Business Link showed a 35 per cent increase in the number of firms requiring its intensive help.

Some £8,000 of the money will be devoted to business skills courses, for which there has been a high demand, and some 120 businesses are expected to benefit. A similar number of management-level workers are expected to take one day ‘back to work’ courses that a further £8,000 will enable to be delivered free. The first round of these workshops began on 16 June at Winchester Business Centre, and offered group support one per week for four weeks.

Winchester has also opened a start-up business grants scheme to offer 50 start-up grants each worth up to £1,000 to new ventures, and will offer £80,000 to support community ownership of village shops, an important factor in encouraging the economic viability of rural communities. The city has a number of popular summer festivals, which bring in some £19 per attendee to the local economy and £200 if they stay overnight. The council has allocated £15,000 to improve the marketing of these events in recognition of their importance to local business.

Winchester will also support a Hampshire County Council initiative to create 'smarter working centres' to offer work space for home workers, travelling business people and small businesses to exchange thinking and test ideas on each other.

Kate Crawford, economic development manager.

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### **Dudley**

#### **Taking advice to businesses**

People who are trying to manage a business



during a recession often need advice but do not have the time to attend meetings or conferences to get it. Therefore Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council arranged to take advice services out to where business people were by a running a 'recession roadshow', initially at a local industrial estate. Its Dudley Means Business campaign bus made its first stop at Hurst Business in Brierley Hill in May.

Advisors were on hand from Business Link West Midlands, Black Country Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturing Advisory Service, Job Centre Plus and the council's business development team so that a wide range of expertise was on offer to those seeking advice.

Advice could be given on the spot on topics such as ways to find extra financial support, and follow-up appointments could be made for those who wanted a more formal meeting. Information leaflets were also available.

The roadshows are part of a 10-point anti-recession plan adopted by the council.

It is also helping local businesses by paying invoices within 10 days, rather than the normal 28, and has offered a rent freeze for units on at its Lye Business Centre for this financial year.

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### **Stroud**

#### **Combating ghost towns with art projects in empty shops**

Dursley's town centre thrived for many years by serving residents who worked in the area's factories, but even before the recession the

changing local economy meant it had to try to attract customers from a wider area. The downturn led to some shops on approach roads standing empty, which created a poor first impression of the town. Stroud District Council's response was to keep the shops in use as temporary galleries for local artists.

It offered to repair the shops, and paint them from a range of appropriate heritage colours, in return for which landlords would allow them to be used as galleries until new tenants could be found. So far, 13 local artists have exhibited in the shops, and the project, named On View, has

given a new lease of life to the area.

Despite the recession, two shops have since been let and one sold for redevelopment, says Stroud's town centres co-ordinator Vicky Hancock, who says it has proved an inexpensive way to improve the town's appearance and attract new shops. Landlords deal directly with Ms Hancock, who negotiates terms, can access specialist legal advice from council officers, secure project funding and arrange media coverage.

An artist co-ordinator oversees the exhibitions, including the installation of the work and lighting, and chooses work for display from CDs submitted by artists.

Sainsbury's is to open a store in Dursley, which will draw customers from a wider catchment, and the vibrant impression created for the town by projects like On View should encourage these new customers to linger and try other shops.

Numerous enquires about On View have been received from communities here and abroad.

Vicky Hancock, town centre manager  
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## West Somerset

### Supporting tourism to exploit 'holiday at home' trend

Rural coastal areas like West Somerset face their own set of challenges in responding to the recession, as their economies are dominated by small businesses, some of them seasonal employers in the tourism industry. The district council has decided on a series of small



initiatives targeted to help different sectors of the local economy, which while costing only £168,000 in all will soften the downturn.

It has set aside £50,000 from the Working Neighbourhoods Fund to make investments of up to £10,000 each that support those businesses whose activities contribute to its economic strategy.

West Somerset has also bid to the South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership's economic challenge fund for money to improve the attractiveness of tourist centres in anticipation of a good season in the summer of 2009 as more people who would previously have travelled abroad choose instead to holiday in the UK.

The money would be used for signage in Dulverton and a street scene project in Minehead, where empty shops would be used for temporary exhibitions and displays of local products, and also by community organisations. A campaign will be launched to make local businesses more aware of eligibility for small business rate relief, which some 100 local firms could claim but do not.

The council is also making its hardship business rate relief for small business available in the current year, rather than retrospectively, so that firms with a rateable value of up to £15,000 that need help now can claim without delay.

## **Knowsley**

### **Helping a major local employer to recruit**

When business process outsourcer Vertex landed two new contracts for its Knowsley

call centre it needed to find 600 new workers, and turned to Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council for help.

In what is thought to be the first arrangement of its kind, the two worked together to identify suitable potential employees and offered support to candidates with transferable skills, regardless of their previous experience.

Nick Kavanagh, executive director for regeneration, economy and skills, says: "In times like these, local authorities should be taking decisive and sometimes unprecedented steps.

"Our close relationship with companies like Vertex illustrates the real value of partnership working."

Mr Kavanagh says the council's aim was to equip long term unemployed or less qualified residents with the skills they need to secure permanent jobs with leading employers.

"Unlike private recruitment agencies, many of whom are interested in 12 week placements, we are interested in the long term," he says.

He points out that some candidates have never worked, or have long been out of the jobs market, and can find the idea of taking a job daunting.

Council staff act as mentors to the new workers to help them to successfully integrate into Vertex, and act as a first point of contact for any problems whether in the workplace or for issues such as childcare or transport.

Steve Joyce, UK resources manager for Vertex, says: "It can be very difficult for companies to find skilled workers, so when Knowsley

suggested a kind of 'one stop shop' for training and recruitment it seemed the perfect solution and a good opportunity to broaden our search."

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### **Norfolk** **Helping smaller companies to cope with redundancies**

Norfolk County Council was among the founders of the Norfolk Redundancy Network, a multi-agency group developed to provide practical support to employers and their staff who face the loss of their jobs.



A recent survey by the local Chamber of Commerce found that 34 per cent of businesses anticipated making redundancies during this year.

While the region's economy is relatively strong, the number of redundancies notified in the year to June 09 was over 5000, almost double the number notified in the previous 12 months, with a wide range of sectors affected but construction, manufacturing and retail amongst the hardest hit.

The network shares intelligence to, where possible, avoid closures, and ensures that staff at risk get timely support. Jobcentre Plus has agreed to provide intelligence of all impending redundancies to Norfolk Redundancy Network members so that early contact can be made where appropriate.

The network is also trying to ensure that funds delivered through the Learning and Skills Council for workforce re-skilling are used in collaboration with network members to avoid duplication of effort.

A survival guide for businesses has been produced which provides a comprehensive overview of all regional business support initiatives.

It is also working with Jobcentre Plus on the rapid response service for redundancies, which is now available to smaller firms instead of, as normal, being confined to those making more than 100 people redundant.

The council is also working with the Norfolk Credit Union (NCU) to promote the benefits of Credit Unions and also exploring the concept of establishing a Credit Union Current Account (CUCA) for people in Norfolk.

It has also been in discussions with a Community Development Finance Initiative provider to make available a loan to enable it to extend its lending to qualifying businesses.

A major “meet the buyer” event was recently held in Norwich in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce along with the districts, police, health service, business link and several private sector buyers. In all 29 buyers provided excellent opportunities for the 150 suppliers who attended. The event was highly successful with 100 per cent of buyers rating the event as Good or Very Good and 95 per cent of suppliers rating it the same. Feedback suggested the buyers were particularly helpful and able to clearly provide positive information about their respective organisations. Over two thirds expect business to result from the event and case studies will be presented as they become known. It is proposed to hold a similar event next year.

In addition, the council has provided additional substantial support to various support agencies such as Norfolk Guidance Service (NGS) with £200k which will assist those who have recently lost work. It is a flexible and adaptable service that aims to remove final barriers to work and will do so by looking at local need and be delivered across the county, focusing on areas where provision is limited. NGS are also delivering ‘skills health checks’ in Jobcentre Plus which is a Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funded pilot which offers quality advice and guidance to the unemployed. It also is able to provide free careers guidance to any adult in Norfolk (employed and unemployed) under ‘nextstep’ which is funded by the LSC. The

European Social Fund is financing a project, ‘Flexible Routeways’, which enables NGS to work intensively (8 hours a week for up to 26 weeks) with customers who are the furthest away from the labour market until they find sustainable employment.

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# section 3

## preparing for the recovery

### **Barking & Dagenham** **Leading the way with council** **apprenticeships**

Many councils encourage apprenticeship schemes and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham has committed to take at least 100 young apprentices onto its own payroll this year. 48 young people are currently employed with another 52 due to start in September. As the largest local employer it wants to help the many residents who have been traditionally disadvantaged in the labour market. In total some 750 apprenticeships will be offered job



opportunities in the council, its partners and local companies.

Apprenticeships generally run over a year, offering four days practical work experience in the work place, and one day at college or with another training provider.

*"I have been doing an apprenticeship in business administration since May. I find it very enjoyable and interesting and am on placement at The Adult College, which is based in Fanshawe. Working as an apprentice is a great way to gain the knowledge and experience within a professional environment. I am also on route to getting my NVQ. I attend college for one day a week and get to meet fellow apprentices and talk about how everything is going. I would definitely recommend the apprenticeship scheme to any young person wishing to better their skills, or even if they're just trying something new."*

### **Billy Benmore** **business administration apprentice**

The council says apprenticeships offer a proven solution where employers can attract motivated recruits, keen to learn alongside existing employees, in a training programme tailored specifically to their needs.

Trained apprentices are then equipped with essential skills that the job market needs and the council cites research that shows apprentices can earn, on average, more than £100,000 more throughout their lifetime than other employees.

Barking and Dagenham was the first council to sign the national Skills Pledge in 2007,

which it says shows “a very public commitment to raising the aspirations of local residents, local businesses, and their workforces”. The scheme also benefits existing employees who can update their own skills by working with apprentices.

Adult and Community Services has been quick to buy into the scheme, and is funding a programme to train up to 30 young people (16-18 yrs) to care and assist clients in their home in part made possible with additional funds from the sector skills council, Skills For Care.

For more information about the Barking and Dagenham apprenticeship, call apprentice development manager, Steve Lee, on 020 8270 6530 or email [learn2earn@lbbd.gov.uk](mailto:learn2earn@lbbd.gov.uk).

### **Slagelse, Denmark** **A country where wide powers have enabled councils to effectively respond to the recession.**

Danish councils have a significant role in health, the administration of social benefits and joblessness and labour market policy. They also enjoy high levels of self-financing to fund it. From August 2009, Danish councils will have full control for tackling worklessness in their areas. One example is Slagelse, an area representing 49,000 people, 100kms south west of Copenhagen.

The local authority is implementing a major programme with the objective of reducing unemployment from 6.5 per cent to 4 per cent by 2013. Its main thrusts are:

- re-training people for the upturn. The

local authority has launched a re-training programme to encourage some 1,700 unemployed people back into work. It has developed a local health care education institution, which has trained social workers, who are in great local demand. The authority also works with businesses and suppliers to review all construction contracts to encourage companies to take on local apprentices;

- Engaging local business in education and training. Local businesses are invited to play a central role in steering the delivery of the council’s re-training and education programmes to ensure they meet the needs of the job market. In return, businesses give all job seekers additional support, such as apprenticeships, work experience, or mentoring.

Stimulating regeneration and securing local jobs. Local small businesses are struggling to survive in tough economic conditions, but the local authority has been able to bring forward the construction of seven schools and investment in energy efficiency and maintenance in other public buildings. Around 70 per cent of the -15m invested in the two programmes will support local firms and services, and protect some 200 local jobs.

### **Westminster** **Supporting employers to recruit apprentices**

Westminster City Council has supported the establishment of a not-for-profit company whose aim is to increase the number of apprentices in small and medium-sized

companies in London. This is modelled on an approach used for more than 20 years in Australia, and means companies can take on junior staff at low cost and low risk.

The London Apprenticeship Company shortlists suitable apprentices for companies and itself employs them at a wage rate set by the company, providing them with structured supervision during the apprenticeship.

Sectors covered include retail, creative media, plumbing, social care, business administration, hospitality, construction and leisure.

In central London some 80 per cent of companies employ fewer than five people, and this small size means they can find it difficult to afford training costs.

Because the LAC employs the apprentices, this cost is taken out for the employer.

Others partners in the LAC include City of Westminster College, Westminster Kingsway College, Central West Group Apprentices (Australia), Vital Regeneration, Paddington Development Trust, the Learning and Skills Council and the London Development Agency.

“We are facing tough economic times and apprenticeships are a highly effective way to ensure you have the right skills in place to survive the economic downturn but also prepare your business for when the economic climate improves,” says Brian Connell, cabinet member for economic development and family policy.

Westminster also negotiates apprenticeship opportunities through the re-let of major contracts such as waste management and parking enforcement.

For more information about how the LAC could assist in your London borough contact the CEO Peter Harlock at Peter.Harlock@londonapprenticeship.co.uk www.londonapprenticeship.co.uk

For more information on Westminster City Council's work visit [www.westminster.gov.uk/beattherecession](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/beattherecession) or contact Katy Bentham on 020 7641 4296 [kbentham@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:kbentham@westminster.gov.uk).

## Tees Valley

### Preparing the ground for a new industrial future

Tees Valley was once synonymous with ICI's chemical operations but since that ended other industries have developed and the area now hopes it will also become centre of low-carbon technology.

Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees councils work through the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit to bring this about.

Some £5bn of investment in petrochemicals, energy, biofuels, ports, logistics, digital/multi-media and advanced engineering sectors is expected and the unit is working to ensure that the infrastructure is in place to make sure this is delivered.

Its North and South Tees Project, supported by regional development agency One NorthEast, has made an audit of industrial land and by September is due to complete a delivery plan for infrastructure.

So far this work has highlighted the issues that the public sector must address in the area to

make a success of new industries.

These include the volume of grid connections available in an area where major energy projects are planned, linking up plants with excess heat and steam with other businesses that could use it and seeking to ensure the continued presence of an ethylene supply chain, a vital material for many local businesses.

Potential developments include green industries such as energy from waste, plastics recovery, waste oil recycling and biomass and biofuels.

Significant medium-term opportunities have been identified in wind turbine manufacture,

oil and gas plant decommissioning, waste recovery and recycling, and low-carbon energy generation, which it is hoped will provide the foundation for the Tees Valley to become a centre of excellence in low-carbon industry.

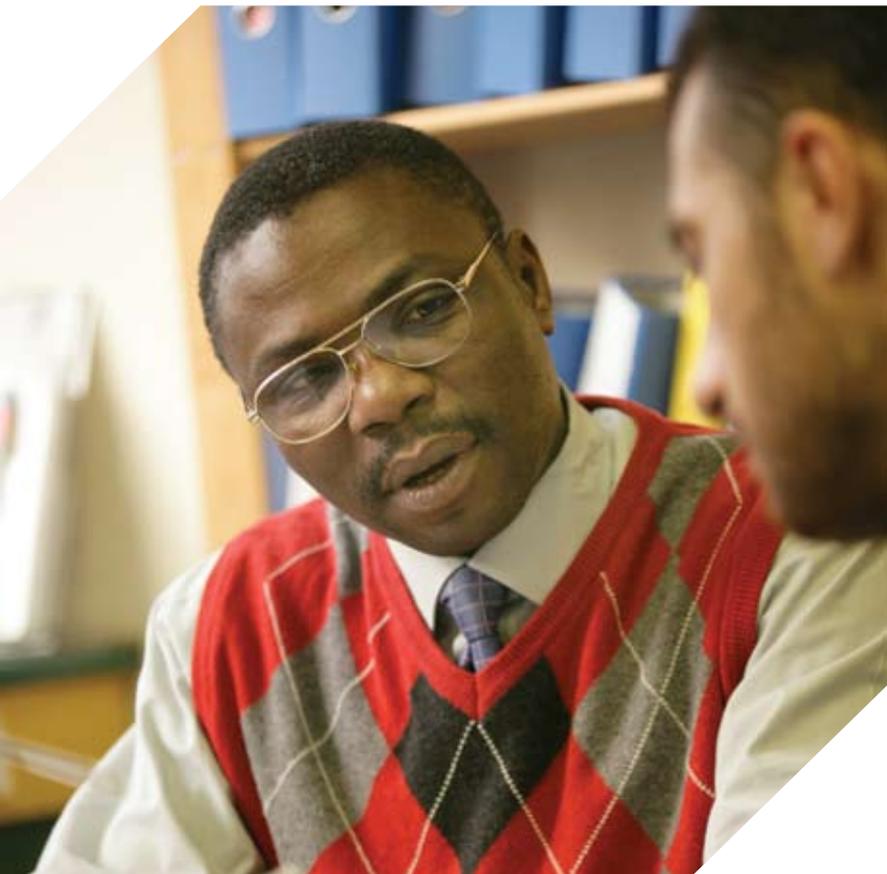
Sarah Tennison, economic strategy officer  
Sarah.Tennison@teesvalley-jsu.gov.uk

## Sutton

### Helping professionals back into work

Sutton is a borough of economic contrasts with its northern wards more closely resembling inner London and other parts of the borough dominated by affluent commuter suburbs. Sutton's economic make-up means that the recession will be experienced very differently by residents in different parts of the borough and several complimentary approaches will be required. Whilst the sort of assistance needed in low income areas is fairly well understood, there is less experience in local government of working with jobless professional people since they have been few in number in recent years and were generally able to manage without their council's help. That has changed in this recession. Sutton has set up of a series of free courses targeted at highly-skilled executives and professionals, following a marked rise in unemployment in its more affluent areas. Many of those who attended are from the hard-hit financial and construction industries.

The programme, thought to be the first of its kind in the country, offers unemployed residents three days of topics that include a CV creation, debt management, retraining, volunteering, finding and applying for a new job; and starting



a new business. These were organised through a partnership with Jobcentre Plus, the Chamber of Commerce and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Lyn Gleeson, executive member for economic development says: "The economic downturn is affecting people from all walks of life and highly-skilled and trained professionals are not immune."

Contact name Steve Farrow, Employment and Skills Manager.

## Nottingham

### A multi-faceted campaign to help local businesses and residents

Nottingham City Council has launched We're On Your Side, a multi-faceted campaign to help local businesses and residents through the recession and prepare for the recovery.

When the downturn began, the council's corporate leadership team commissioned research to assess its likely impact on the city, and found that while it was relatively well-placed, pressures on businesses would include difficulty in accessing credit and falling demand for services.

Those still in work would have lower disposable incomes and financial pressures were expected to worsen family difficulties for some.

The council's short-term measures include advice for residents on accessing some £32m of unclaimed benefits, the creation of a 12-strong credit crunch team of council advisors and creation of a volunteer advisor training programme.

Nottingham has recently had £243m allocated for the decent homes programme and has

decided to provide 243 apprenticeships in construction trades which will enable people to learn while upgrading the city's social housing.

For the medium term it is developing a financial inclusion strategy and exploring the potential for energy efficient manufacturing in the city.

An Economic Resilience Forum of local public, private and educational sector interests has been convened by the council, chaired by John Peace, chairman of Experian. Council chief executive Jane Todd says this body will provide "expert intelligence and advice on business, finance and economic matters, oversee the city's recession, realignment and recovery plans, including advising on Nottingham's unique economic selling points and members will act as ambassadors for the city".

## Arvika, Sweden

### A council investing in retraining

Investment by the local council at Arvika, in Sweden's western Wermland region, has helped to deliver new jobs for one-third of the 1,500 people who lost their jobs locally in heavy industry since the recession began.

Before the recession, Arvika had an unemployment rate of 2 per cent, but this has since risen to around 8 per cent.

The council is a long-standing partner in a social enterprise set up originally when a major local employer closed in 1997.

Arvika Naeringslivscentrum is co-owned by the council, the Westra Wermlands Sparbank,

the local Swedish Trade Union Confederation and a local business confederation and the industrial development centre of Wermland. Its task is to raise the level of education and training locally and stimulate business growth.

The centre is now self-financing with an approximate turnover of €3.5m.

Arvika council has increased its budget to deal with immediate effects of the recession, with a projected spend for 2009 of €2.2m to maintain investments and developing infrastructure projects.

Arvika Naeringslivscentrum began to promote additional training after last winter's job losses. Like its other courses, these are designed to be practical, flexible and are tailored to the needs of the local population and employers, with a range of adult education, qualified vocational education and university courses.

Some are studying academic courses while around 300 people have undergone vocational re-training to become, among other things, police officers, nurses and teachers. Better news has come from the renewable energy sector, in which several local companies operate, which have so far managed to continue effectively in business with no major job losses.

To support this sector, Arvika council co-funds a European Structural Funds project developing the Glava energy research centre.

# useful sources for further case studies

## LGA Group recession resources

There is a single recession web resource for the LGA group which contains information, guidance and case studies which you can access either through the LGA or IDeA website:

[www.lga.gov.uk/recession](http://www.lga.gov.uk/recession)

or [www.idea.gov.uk/recession](http://www.idea.gov.uk/recession)

This includes a section which contains a wide range of case studies of councils taking action to tackle the effects of the recession:

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelid=1746619>

## Some of the case studies in this report are based on case studies in the following publications:

LGA/Centre for Social Justice: Hidden talents: re-engaging young people

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/2164402>

LGA/CAB: Managing money, helping people with debt

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/2171210>

West Midlands LGA: Local authorities in the West Midlands and the economic downturn

[http://www.wmlga.gov.uk/documents/Policy per cent20Areas/Recession/Economic per cent20Downturn\\_May\\_09\\_email.pdf](http://www.wmlga.gov.uk/documents/Policy%20per%20Areas/Recession/Economic%20per%20Downturn_May_09_email.pdf)

Association of North East Councils: Call to action: North East local government's response to the economic climate

<http://www.northeastcouncils.gov.uk/global/assets/documents/asset20090415115834.pdf>



**Local Government Association**

The Local Government Association is the national voice for more than 400 local authorities in England and Wales. The LGA group comprises the LGA and five partner organisations which work together to support, promote and improve local government.



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