



Supporting a Social Enterprise for Care Leavers and Homeless Young People.

DSC, through the Early Intervention Transformation Programme, is supporting an innovation approach to helping young people leaving care to design a social enterprise that will provide employment to this most vulnerable group.

Securing employment is an important step in any young person's transition to independence as it provides not only financial independence but also promotes self-confidence and a sense of self-worth as well as being an important element in social inclusion.

The average young person does not leave the parental home until the age of 22 (Care Matters N.I .2007) or according to recent statistics by the Who Cares Trust 2015 the age of 24; approximately a quarter of children leaving care will do so between their 16th and 18th birthday. Care leavers are among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people in society and often do not have the levels of stability and support that other young people have access to. Young people in care are currently more likely than their peers to experience unemployment both when first leaving school and throughout their lives although strenuous efforts are being made to reverse this trend.

Within Workstream 3 of the Early Intervention Transformation Programme is a project for care leavers and homeless young people in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust area. The Project centres on the development of a business plan to establish a social enterprise in the area.

A consortium made up of LEDCOM /Business Led NI (LEDCOM charity group), Omagh Enterprise Company and Newry and Mourne Enterprise Agency successfully tendered to complete this work. These three highly experienced companies are all existing social enterprises in their own right and between them have developed over 400 business plans for social enterprises. They have considerable previous experience in working with disadvantaged young people on a full range of business and self-development programmes and are all recognised as experts in their field. Together they will use their combined knowledge and experience to work with the young people and will provide

relevant training, study visits and the opportunity to develop a business plan for a viable social enterprise in their area.

Through the training series there will be a focus on helping the young people to think about how business works, what ideas work and how to create potential employment for themselves .The focus of the consortium will be to ensure that the young people are at the centre of the project from day one, and that they are heavily involved in the project in both co-design and co-production. One to one mentoring will be offered to each young person participating in the project as well as work placements within different social enterprises. The aim of the Project is also to increase confidence amongst the young people and to demonstrate how through social enterprise they can be empowered to take control of their future.

We are excited to see what ideas the young people produce alongside this highly experienced, motivated and enthusiastic network of providers and how we can take the completed business plan forward. Watch this space

