

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (Regeneration and Skills)		
Councillor Paulette Lappin	Cabinet Member Regeneration and Skills	September 2024

EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING

External Funding

We have successfully secured the new extension to the contract with G4S, extending service delivery for Sefton resident through to February 2028. The total potential contract value is now approximately £9 million, which is lower than the originally awarded £14 million figure. This adjustment is due to the incorrect demand anticipated by the DWP at the project's inception and has been an ongoing factor.

LCR UK Shared Prosperity Fund Project (UKSPF):

Delivery commenced on 1st April 2024 and will run until 31st March 2025, with a project value of £1.2 million. UKSPF funding can only be used to provide service for clients who meet the government definition of being "economically inactive".

LCR Young Persons Guarantee (YPG):

The YPG project, valued at £128,443.50 for the period from 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2027, is now in implementation phase. We have worked with Sefton's Early Years team for this job incentive to target early years and childcare employers seeking to recruit new entrants

Free-Port Extension Fund – Phase 2 Cambridge Community Learning Hub

An application for funding for £580,000 has been made to the Free Port Extension Fund to support the Phase 2 works for the Cambridge Road Community Learning Hub. This will be put towards the feasibility of the re-development of the Cambridge Kitchen concept which will be based in the kitchen space vacated by the former Community Pantry CIC, the refurbishment of teaching spaces on the upper floor and an upgrade of digital connectivity throughout the building.

Emergency Procedures Review across E & L Services

Prompted by the tragic events in Southport, in Southport, we have determined that all emergency responses should be reviewed to ensure staff and service user safety. This will include risk assessments, evacuation procedures, and incident plans and some dry runs to be scheduled. Refresher training on alarms, activation and "Run Hide Tell" and protocols related to The Strand Management unit is being rolled out to all staff including Career Connect.

It has also been agreed that Career Connect should pause the programme of home visits for young people across the wards in Southport for a short period. This would usually be a peak time for this intensive tracking and re-engagement activity to ensure that young people without a known destination for September could be contacted. Ongoing monitoring and dialogue will be undertaken by staff at SACL to ensure any safety issues connected with the use of the SING building at Cambridge Road can be identified.

Sefton@work

General Performance Data for June 2024

Data Description	Range	Figures
Total Clients accessing service for ESF support	1 st March 2016 – 30 th September 2023	5,296
Clients accessing service post ESF	From 1 October 2023	899
New clients accessing service this month	June 2024	87
New clients registering by age	June 2024	16-24 26 25-49 45 50+ 16 Not yet known 0
Male Participants	Since 01/01/2016	59.3%
Female Participants	Since 01/01/2016	40.6%
Other Participants	Since 01/01/2016	0.2%
Participants with Disabilities/Health Conditions	Since 01/01/2016	32.7%
Participants without basic skills	Since 01/01/2016	30.9%
People leaving the programme (into jobs/self-emp/training)	Since 01/01/2016	2,208
UKSPF Ways to Work	June 2024	Total to date
Starts on Programme	24	140
Male Participants	70.8%	58.6%
Female Participants	29.2%	40.7%
Prefer not to provide gender	0%	0.7%
Inactive Participants	95.8%	84.3%
Unemployed Participants	4.2%	15.7%
Participants at risk of redundancy	0%	0%
Participants with Disabilities/Health Conditions	20.8%	27.1%
Participants without basic skills	62.5%	44.3%
Participants obtaining employment and/or receiving in-work support	4	9
Footfall (Face to Face contact) (subcategory of Overall Service Demand)	June 2024	855
Overall Service Demand	June 2024	1,656

New Southport Accommodation for Sefton@work

An employer agent has now been appointed to undertake the feasibility works and produce a specification for tender for the new premises identified for Sefton@work, which will be in Cambridge Walks, immediately adjacent to the Town Hall complex. Unless any adverse circumstances emerge once contractors are on site, we expect this to be a relatively short job which may be able to complete within 6 weeks of start on site as the focus of the works is largely a re-fitting exercise of former retail space, removal of stud walls and re-instatement of door frames.

After ongoing negotiation, it has been agreed with the provider Get Set that Sefton@work can continue to utilise some desk space in their office on Houghton Street up to the end of October. This has come as a matter of great relief to the Service and should help minimise disruption to clients and stakeholder partners.

Service Performance Updates

Sefton@Work continue to be invited to events through the 'Team around the School' model which attempts to address issues or concerns before they escalate through a multi-agency core team and supporting team. A new staff member is expected to start at Sefton@Work in August therefore our provision will expand in this area. Referrals are steady and new capacity will increase our Supporting Families engagement.

We continue to refer to the new SMBC F.A.S.T. (Family Advice & Support Team) which has replaced the old MASH referral process. This is a more user-friendly process and we are now picking up referrals through this. Further work and ongoing effort is still required to ensure that FAST are fully aware of what we offer. An Away Day for Early Help is planned for September, and we are hoping to increase knowledge of Sefton@Work amongst the agencies involved to drive appropriate referrals.

We continue to work with client referrals from Youth Justice providing officer from their team with co-location in Bootle and this cohort remains a priority for paid work placements, to help divert from future criminal activity.

Clients are currently being offered up to 12 counselling sessions with a psychotherapist. The sessions can be offered to clients who feel they have significant barriers that are stopping them from taking up opportunities and progressing on their journey back to work. This started at the end of April.

Following the success of wave 1.3 of the Digital Inclusion Initiative in partnership with LCR & Lloyds 3 more sessions are being planned to take place in July. Clients will complete a short digital intervention and receive a free tablet with 6 months data.

Sefton@Work arranged an NHS Health & Social Care Routeway course in conjunction with LCR in June. An information session was held for those interested with 12 places available. The training was delivered by Sefton@Work and SCLS. Course content included: roles and responsibilities within the NHS, the application process, Trust Values, GDPR, Confidentiality and Data Handling, Equality & Diversity, Effective Skills, Qualities and Attitudes for Work, Support with applications and interview preparations.

Client placements are currently being arranged for the school summer holidays to be delivered in partnership with Active Sefton. The placements will be based around Sefton's provision of children's summer camps and activities.

Sefton@Work's Voluntary Routeway Programme started in May, which offers placements to those who need experience to enhance their CVs or help easing back into the world of work. There are 5 placements within various SMBC departments and 3 with CAB Sefton. This programme responds to the needs of our client groups who are struggling to enter the labour market through mainstream recruitment processes. Participants have also benefited from an accredited 3-day pre-placement course delivered by SCLS. Clients have been provided with any uniforms required and all travel expenses will be reimbursed. Placements will run until the beginning of July 2024 and preparations will begin August 2024 for the next cohort.

Sefton@Work is planning to run an 'Intro to Working in Schools' course in July to be delivered by SCLS. Currently recruiting interested clients, the course will provide them with an awareness of the diverse types of educational settings and roles available. The course, which will be held at Sefton@Work Bootle, will also offer clients a guaranteed interview with local Teaching Assistant recruiters.

Our Fit for Success course started at the end of June at Crosby Lakeside. Over 5 weeks and for up to 10 clients, the course is designed to promote a positive mindset and includes class-based activities in Water Sports such as rafting, kayaking, dragon boating for team working,

and confidence building. Following completion of the course clients were offered a 3-month gym pass at Sefton Leisure Centres to continue their wellbeing pathway. A video with clients about their experience has been embedded into the newsletter attached below.

Sefton@Work have devised an alternative course to Fit for Success called Create for Success which also started at the end of June. Delivered in the Sefton@Work Bootle office training room, Create for Success follows a similar format but incorporates art therapy rather than sports. The course is still designed to promote a positive mindset and encourages clients to take part that may prefer not to do physical activity.

Sefton@Work are continuing to work with and support SMBC Early Years and are liaising with them and Sefton's out-of-school-hours organisations to utilise The Young Persons Guarantee. These organisations can employ a Sefton young person, aged 18-25 (must have been out of work, education, or training for more than six months) and receive £500 for each month they are employed, up to 6 months. Additionally, another course designed to promote 'Careers with Children', is in the planning for September. The course will aim to encourage participants to consider working in Early Years as a careers choice.

An event to celebrate employers that support Sefton@Work and our clients is also in the planning stage. Sefton@Work's Employer Liaison Team continues to attract new employers to sign its new Employer Partnership Agreement which has been endorsed by the Chief Executive of SMBC. This event aims to strengthen Sefton@Work's relationship with local employers, enhancing our ability to support our clients into work. The employer celebration event is expected to take place in October.

Career Connect continue to attend Sefton@Work on a weekly outreach Programme to engage with our young people who are NEET or working with Early Help.

Sefton@Work continues with a rolling programme of delivery in the new training room at the Strand, which consists of employability interventions, functional skills workshops, digital inclusion skills, sector qualifications and routeways, jobs fairs, employer and networking events and much more. As well as delivering some sessions ourselves, others are in partnership with SCLS and other external partners and employers.

Sefton@work and SACL will be using joint staffing resource to collaborate on the sessional programme for Bootle moving forward, with a tutor from SACL working alongside the Service on a weekly basis from September onwards

Quarterly Newsletter

Our latest quarterly Newsletter Flash Extra has been published widely online and electronically to our partners and clients via social media, email and our website. To view the Newsletter in full follow the link. [Flash Extra July 2024](#)

Sefton Adult Community Learning Service

	Target	November		December		January		February		March		April		May		June		July	
	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24	22/23	23/24
Unique Learners	2000	705	637	795	755	996	860	1045	912	1125	965	1139	1047	1298	1067	1562	1132	1656	1167
Attendance	90%	89.39%	90.09%	89.53%	90.81%	90.31%	89.96%	90.21%	89.40%	90.02%	89.32%	89.08%	89.46%	89.31%	89.53%	89.63%	89.28%	90.09%	89.52%
Areas of Deprivation	35%	32.05%	37.26%	31.24%	35.38%	32.45%	35.63%	33.18%	35.14%	33.55%	34.17%	32.34%	34.17%	32.87%	34.74%	33.08%	35.08%	33.22%	34.82%
BME	16%	26.19%	23.33%	24.11%	19.88%	23.06%	22.46%	24.18%	21.31%	22.74%	19.59%	22.98%	18.73%	21.73%	18.69%	21.73%	18.14%	21.63%	18.05%
Disability	25%	16.48%	20.36%	15.62%	18.91%	16.68%	18.90%	16.89%	18.25%	18.55%	18.27%	17.43%	18.32%	18.55%	18.34%	18.18%	18.41%	17.37%	18.20%
Male	35%	23.25%	29.52%	21.70%	27.58%	23.97%	27.65%	24.77%	27.51%	27.15%	27.24%	25.84%	27.95%	26.75%	27.94%	26.97%	28.21%	26.95%	27.91%
Female	65%	76.75%	70.48%	78.30%	72.52%	76.03%	72.35%	75.23%	72.49%	72.85%	72.76%	74.16%	72.05%	73.25%	72.06%	73.03%	71.79%	73.05%	72.09%
Unemployed	40%	65.47%	61.43%	64.61%	57.31%	65.94%	59.72%	66.30%	59.38%	68.60%	59.43%	68.22%	57.84%	67.86%	57.31%	64.91%	57.16%	63.36%	56.24%
Learning Aims		886	840	1037	1026	1427	1291	1522	1403	1772	1524	1784	1703	2075	1750	2536	1907	2672	1956
AEB Funding	£146,348	£14,473	£12,296	£14,699	£19,809	£23,375	£50,527	£23,798	£51,544	£44,638	£60,522	£44,092	£70,610	£58,182	£74,145	£75,183	£79,493	£83,054	£85,943

Key Indicators:

Adult Education Budget (formula funding attached to formal qualifications) shows a slight increase throughout the months, although this has still not reached where we wished to be at year end. This has been caused by the impact of staff absence through illness, which has affected ESOL provision in particular. This is a matter of concern which is being addressed with new recruitment since the curriculum leader for this area has recently left the service.

Attendance Rates: Attendance rates have consistently met or exceeded the target, indicating effective engagement strategies.

Areas of Deprivation and Unemployment: High engagement with learners from areas of deprivation and unemployed learners have been achieved through a robust and effective marketing and engagement strategy targeting these communities.

Learner Demographics: Gender and BAME participation rates are relatively stable but show areas where further improvements can be made to meet targets and with on-going staff recruitment in this area we are confident this will be improved for the new academic year. Increasing male and disabled learners' participation into the service will remain an objective for next years provision we will investigate new ways to attract participants including dialogue with Adult Social Care to ascertain possibility of referrals.

Promotions and Engagement

Autumn Prospectus: The Autumn Prospectus has been finalised and delivered door-to-door. Copies have also been distributed locally at partner and community venues.

Summer Engagement Plans: The service will be attending various events to publicise courses and raise the profile of the service, such as Salt and Tar events and Hallies Hub.

Cambridge Road Building and Facilities

- The remaining works on the disused toilet block have been completed.
- Some internal repairs and maintenance is required in teaching rooms where dry rot and damp has re-occurred since the original refurbishment project
- Due to extensive delamination arising from poor installation, all paving at the front of the building will be removed and replaced starting from 7th August. The work is expected to last approximately two weeks. An alternative entrance will be used for staff and visitors, located at the far end near the exit during this time.

New Cambridge Kitchen concept

Following the exit of the Community Pantry CIC , we have been working up the concept of the Cambridge Kitchen and seeking interested partners. We have met with one potential operator led by a local person seeking a venue to drive forward their new charity which is due to focus on food skills, employability for those with disabilities and a range of other barriers, such as Neurodivergent people, and other vulnerable groups who might otherwise face barriers and need extra support. They would also aim to promote and provide a support network for our wider community, offering services to enhance skills, independence, well-being, and quality of life. Initial discussions would indicate this to be a good fit for our Operator partnership for Cambridge Kitchen but this organisation is in a very early stage of development. We will continue dialogue with other potential operators, including the coffee supplier for Salt and Tar.

Quality Assurance

Staff and Recruitment:

- 24 tutors have been active since August 2023.
- 5 newly appointed tutors have been secured for ESOL, Early Years, Maths, Crafts, and English to start in September.
- A substantive English and Maths tutor has also been appointed.
- 2 additional sessional tutors have been shortlisted for Maths and ESOL.

Training:

- All staff are up-to-date with mandatory corporate CPD requirements
- Newly appointed tutors are completing corporate and safeguarding training before starting teaching.
- 2 managers are completing the Level 4 Certificate in Leading Internal Quality Assurance, due in November 2024.
- A mandatory staff training day was completed on 15th July 2024.

Awarding Bodies Quality Assurance Visits:

- Ascentis (ESOL), May 2024: No actions required.
- NCFE (Education & Health/Social Care), May 2024: No actions required.
- NCFE (English & Maths): No actions for Maths, 1 action for English regarding the completion of the Learner Observation Achievement Record (LOAR).
- Ascentis (Education & Training, Independent Living, and Progression Awards), July 2024 inspection led to No improvement actions required and Positive feedback was received as follows: "*The biggest strength of this verification was how the centre had clearly taken great steps to understand every requirement for these qualifications and ensured that the portfolios reflected this. Portfolios were some of the best the EQA has sampled to date for Education and Training. The intervention taken when issues with the assessment of Independent Living arose was exemplary and demonstrated the robust nature of the IQA process within the centre. The level of standardisation achieved by the centre is phenomenal and it was a pleasure to sample the evidence today.*"

NEET REDUCTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICE

June 2024 Performance on NEET and Not Known

The data for our monthly performance for NEET and Not Known is cleansed locally by Career Connect and verified with government sources using the NCCIS database which each LA is required to update monthly. This forms part of the tracking element of the NEET

Reduction and Early Intervention Service. The purpose of this tracking is to identify, target and support those young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

The following outlines the progress made by the Service in June 2024. Data for July 2024 will not be published until the end of August 2024.

Table 1 – Current NEET 16-17 Performance (June 2024)

Area	NEET	NK	Combined	Current Combined Rank
Sefton	3.60%	0.20%	3.80%	1
Wirral	4.40%	0.90%	5.30%	2
ENGLAND	3.50%	1.80%	5.30%	
NORTH WEST	4.50%	1.30%	5.80%	
Knowsley	6.40%	0.90%	7.30%	3
Halton	8.00%	0.40%	8.40%	4
St Helens	7.90%	0.50%	8.40%	5
Liverpool	6.30%	5.50%	11.80%	6

Comparisons with Liverpool City Region indicate:

- Sefton continues to have the lowest combined NEET & NK % across the LCR
- Sefton is performing better than the regional NEET & NK combined %
- All areas have seen an increase in NEET & NK combined from June 2023
- Sefton are currently ranked 2nd within our Statistical Neighbour 16-17 NEET & NK %
- At 0.2% Sefton's NK has remained the same year on year, this is 1.1% below North West and 1.6% below National Average
- NEET at 3.6% has increased by 0.4% year on year. This is 0.9% below regional average of 4.5%.

Table 2. Leavers and Joiners to NEET/EET in June

NEET Joiners and Leavers	Totals
Total No of NEET Joiners June 2024	31
Total No of NEET Leavers June 2024	25

Table 3. Cohort Analysis

Age	Cohort Size	NEET	%	NK	%
16	2992	98	3.28%	2	0.07%
17	2935	118	4.02%	8	0.27%
Totals	5927	216	3.6%	10	0.2%

- The cohort for 16–17-year-old is currently 5,927 young people, 216 of these are currently NEET and 10 NK
- 33.63% of the 16-17 NEET and NK cohort are also in one or more of our vulnerable groups (76 out of 226). This is a much higher proportion than in previous years and continues a trend. This is indicating that the issues facing our young people who remain

NEET are multiple and complex and does not simply reflect the type of provision open to this age group.

Preventative Work

As we approach the end of the school year, the cohort for our current Year 11 leavers and September Guarantee set is 3,200, and 277 of these young people have been identified as 'At Risk of NEET' (RONI). This specific group will be the main target group for work across July and August for the Career Connect team.

Career Connect will also be working closely with our young people with SEN to ensure that they have a guaranteed offer for September. This group of young people in Year 11 has increased from 147 last year to 213 this year. They have recently supported young people from Pinefield School to attend an open day at Southport College and funded vouchers for attendance.

Through a collaboration with Hugh Baird College, Career Connect have supported the development of a bespoke course called Engage targeted at young people with Education, Health and Care plans. 16 referrals have already been made. The initial programme will be online, delivered over two days and consist of GCSE Maths and English together with Personal Development. The aim of the programme is, over time, to encourage learners to re-engage in face-to-face education while continuing to learn online until that is possible. Hopefully, the 'in person' learning will commence within the next academic year. This is a pilot programme and will be evaluated in due course.

Due to the substantial increase in young people with Mental Health as a barrier to progressing into EET and the cohort accessing Pinefield complementary provision in year 11 increasing from 27 last year to 48 young people this year– Career Connect have worked with Preparation for Adulthood Post 16 SEN manager and also the SWRAC training provider to secure and develop a new post 16 pathway for this cohort to support emotional health and wellbeing, this is called Routes to EET and is a course to develop the skills and abilities to progress on to their next steps. Career Connect have identified 26 young people, with the potential for 16 to start (2 groups), a lot of planning, resource and support has gone into this, ensuring young people are receiving transition support, taking to and arranging visits, 'handholding' and advocating on young person's behalf.

Evaluation of the recent Hugh Baird Community Programme shows that 9 young people participated starting in April for 12 weeks whose average time being NEET was 2 months NEET or longer. Outcomes from this group include 4 apprenticeships commenced, 4 returning to other learning, and 1 receiving one to one support to assist re-engagement. The College has committed to running 3 additional courses this academic year, and Career Connect are identifying referrals for September starts. This has created 36 new opportunity places for NEET young people who would otherwise not commence a mainstream College course.

Career Connect – under their Caring Business Charter have case-loaded 4 additional young care experienced young people needing Careers Information, Advice and Guidance who fall outside of the remit of the Council's NREIS contract. (Generally these cases tend to be living outside the Borough of Sefton).

Caring Business Charter Update

The Charter is a pro-active initiative from Economic Growth and Housing to support the Corporate Parenting duty of the Council and is operated via Sefton@work. The Charter aims to provide wide ranging opportunities for placements, work experience or other careers inspiration sessions from private sector partners, stakeholders and investors known to Sefton.

Over the past period we have achieved a range of positive outcomes to support our care experienced young people:

New Directions – 2 new care experienced young people have been offered full time L2 Apprenticeship, 1 started 31st July 2024, the other is waiting for start date end of August.

Hugh Baird College – 1 young person has commenced a 6-month full time voluntary placement within the IT department.

Career Connect – have supported 4 care experienced young people with high quality IAG and CVs as part of their Charter offer who would otherwise fall outside their contracted provision

The Sovini Group – 1 care experienced young person has commenced a 1 day a week 12-week placement with Sovini during the summer and before commencing a course at Hugh Baird College.

Southport FC Montgomery & Le Roi Mascot Programme

Working in partnership with the Caring Business Charter, Southport Football Club asked if we could co-ordinate their new Mascot programme for the 2024/25 football season. This offer would enable 18 care experience young people from the ages of 8 – 11 to represent the club as their mascot for one of their home league games.

All young people participating have been chosen through our Fostering Service and Virtual School and the co-ordination with the Club has been through the Charter. All mascots will receive 2 free adult tickets for the main stand, and a Southport FC football shirt. With consent from their carers, the children will feature in and receive a matchday programme if they wish and they will also meet the players, participate in a pre-match kickabout on the pitch and lead the players out at the start of the game. They will also receive a photograph of them with the team and the coin toss with each of the captains.

As this was a younger cohort than our service would normally work with, Charter staff contacted the Fostering Team to raise awareness of the programme, promote the offer and request that they identify young people from their caseloads who would like to take up these opportunities. After several attempts to promote the offer, and numerous emails to encourage take up, we managed to identify 12 children who responded. Although names were put forward by Children's Services they requested that our service co-ordinate the programme on their behalf. The Charter staff accepted the request and although challenging and time consuming, the following actions were carried out ensure that all young people and their carers were offered a match date of their choice:

- Contacting the relevant Key Workers to obtain the email addresses of each young person's carer.
- Contacting each named carer to explain what would be involved on the day and asking for their consent to allow their young person to attend one of the matches.
- Sending dates of all matches to each of the carers to identify which game they would like to attend.
- Co-ordinating the dates to ensure each game was covered and the dates were suitable for the carer/young person.
- Emailing confirmation to formalise the date of the game the young person would be attending.
- Requesting additional consent to forward email/telephone numbers to the Club so that they could contact them direct.

- Liaising with the club to allocate each child to a match.
- Requesting additional information from the club to ensure that relevant GDPR practices were in place and ensuring they got consent from carer for any photographs or match day stories was given.
- In addition, the Charter has negotiated with the Club for additional tickets so that younger/older siblings or young people in their care can also attend the matches.

All home games have now been allocated a mascot up to the end of January 2024, including the Boxing Day game. The Charter will continue to work with the Fostering Team to identify other young people so that we can ensure that all young people who wish to are given the opportunity to participate.

INVESTSEFTON UPDATE

Role

InvestSefton is the enterprise, business support and inward investment service of Sefton Council, it leads on business engagement and supports new and existing businesses and investors in Sefton to increase economic growth in the borough. InvestSefton is also the council's business support and investment delivery brand, working closely with partners across the Liverpool City Region including the Combined Authority, Growth Platform and a range of business membership organisations and networks to help maximise the benefits of the support offered by these organisations to Sefton businesses. The overall aim is to make Sefton an attractive and easy place for businesses to start, operate, grow, and thrive. The team helps deliver the local business, growth, enterprise and inward investment objectives of the council's Sefton 2030 Vision and Economic Strategy. It also delivers current Government UK Shared Prosperity Fund business support programmes in Sefton.

Summary

InvestSefton remains totally focussed on business growth and sustainability which remains very much central to delivery as businesses face increasing economic pressures including cost of living, materials, supply chain and energy costs across a range of sectors. The team is working with other city region support organisations such as the LCR Growth Platform and a range of other public/private sector providers of support.

InvestSefton has been awarded £782,414 for Place Based Business Support and IRO £98,000 Town Centre business centre funding. The team has commissioned work for start-ups and business sustainability support in town centres to two providers. Work has now started with MEH/Safe Regeneration delivering two start-up events in Bootle and Southport in March. Groundwork also launched its sustainability support for town centre businesses.

It is worth noting that LCR still awaits confirmation of any extensions to existing UKSPF which is due to end 31 March 2025. Like other local authorities' teams are keeping a close watch on election outcomes after which a clearer picture should emerge.

The team has now approved bids for specialist business consultants to augment InvestSefton's advisory and guidance support in areas including diagnostics; marketing and sales; human resources; strategic business planning; social media & e-marketing; management consultancy; Internationalisation Organisation for standardisation (ISO) Quality Support and Financial Management. These have now been approved.

Events and workshops are at the core of InvestSefton's one to many delivery strategy to businesses providing demand led business topics selected by businesses and covering a wide range of support such as online sales, marketing, business sustainability, cyber security and digital technologies. The events remain popular and attract large numbers of businesses including Sefton Economic Forum and two new network groups-Sefton Huddle (Digital & technology) and Sefton Finance & Professionals Group. **In partnership with MEH and Safe Regeneration InvestSefton is also hosting a series of start-up events for Sefton residents looking to set up their own business. Two sessions held in Maghull Town Hall were well received by local residents.**

The team is reviewing www.investsefton.com which will be updated. A landing page on the council's main website has also been recently updated at [Business support and investment \(sefton.gov.uk\)](#)

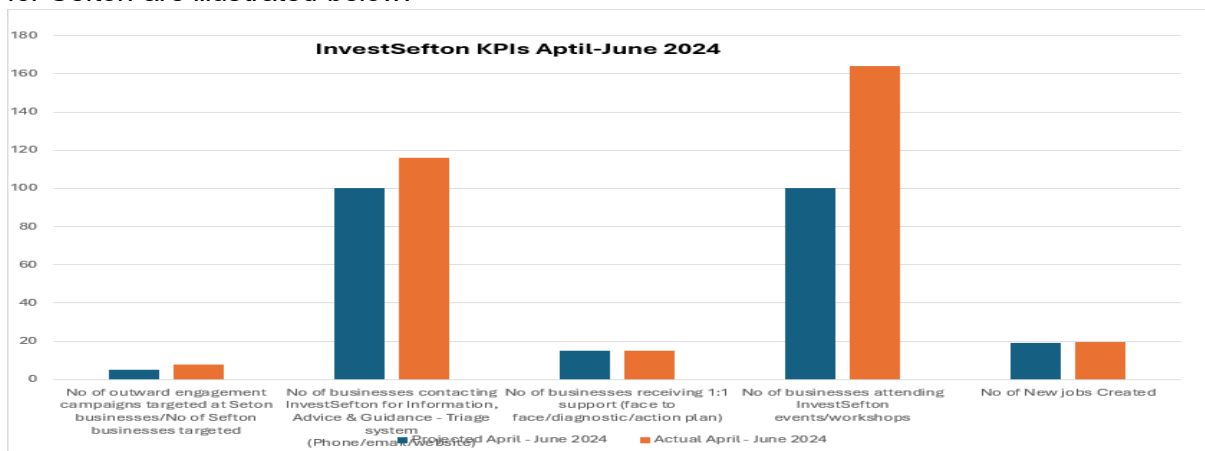
Inward Investment has also been secured most notably in Bootle through Mersey Reach and Atlantic Park while the team supports Southport Town Deal and Southport Business Park activities. Other investment and expansion enquiries remain on going and active.

The team is co-ordinating a bi-weekly round-up of Economic Growth & Housing company investment activity as part of the Council's Strategic Growth & Investment programme. This will help track customer journey across teams and the intention is to expand across other services.

InvestSefton has visited in and around the Southport incident areas following the tragic events last week. The team is collecting intelligence on impact on businesses and support going forward. This work is a priority for the team with a specific focus on Hart Street which has its cordon withdrawn in the past week. A Business Recovery Fund is being developed to help those businesses forced to close

UKSPF Shared Prosperity Funding

Place Based Business Support- Sefton's allocation is £782,414, which includes c.£23k top-sliced monies for central co-ordination and website development via Growth Platform. The project has been given the delivery brand name-**Business Support Service** and a steering group chaired by Sefton has been established. Latest Key Performance Indicators for Sefton are illustrated below:



Business Start-up support-This is delivered via the aforementioned Place Based Business Support programme. InvestSefton commissioned support for start-ups via competitive tender for a £80,000 contract. Following evaluation this was awarded to:

- **Merseyside Expanding Horizons (MEH) & Safe Regeneration**-This is a Bootle based partnership led by MEH who manage the Big Onion in Bootle Strand shopping centre and Southport Town Hall. The Big Onion facility is equipped with co-working spaces, meeting rooms, presentation facilities, and high-speed internet connectivity, and offers an incubator hub to up to 20 new start businesses. Within Southport, they use a prime location in the Town Hall. Safe Regeneration run incubator units in Bootle from the St Mary's Complex, this is their main delivery location. Both were part of the previous LCR Enterprise hub funded under ERDF until 30 June 2023

The aim of this contract is to support residents to start a business it is envisaged that this contract will help 50 individuals to start a business as well as raising the profile of self-employment to residents. **To date the project has helped establish 6 new business start-ups.** In addition LCR Growth Platform has now published the latest piece of StartUp content on a joint website - [A Guide to Planning Startup Finance](#).

Town Centres business support-Similarly, the team also went to open market for a business support sustainability commission worth £60,000. Following evaluation this was awarded to:

- **Groundwork Cheshire, Lancashire & Merseyside**-Groundwork is a Merseyside based national organisation with a team of professional in-house consultants and associates with a variety of technical expertise including energy auditing, carbon management and environmental training. These are supported by the Director of Business who has over 25 years' experience delivering public funded environmental / low carbon business support projects to businesses, including delivery of the SRB 6 funded Sefton Business Environment Association. Specialisms include delivery of sustainability support and action plans through Groundwork Sustainable Business Membership scheme. The team has previously worked with Groundwork under SRB projects in south Sefton.
- The aim of this contract is delivering support to accommodation providers, cafes / restaurants and independent retailers who are based within one of the following town centres, Southport, Bootle, Crosby or Maghull. By the end of the support 60 businesses will have been supported to develop a sustainability policy and action plan.

InvestSefton has a busy and productive events calendar supporting businesses on a one-to-many basis. The events are often in the form of a workshop led by business leaders and experts free of charge focussing on a range of demand-led topics which the businesses request themselves.

The team co-hosted two start up sessions in Maghull Town Hall on 17 July, both afternoon and evening. 20 local residents attended both sessions and MEH and Safe Regeneration staff were on hand to provide in-depth one to one support to people running late into the evening. The overall feedback was positive.

Childcare Providers grant support

InvestSefton has been assisting the Children's Care Providers team on a new grant scheme they are introducing. This includes advice and guidance on governance, application process and supporting evidence requirements including risk assessments. Two InvestSefton Business Growth Advisers hosted a business planning clinic on 20th June 2024 for the Care Providers and met with 5 businesses providing them with support with the application process as well as assisting with Business planning and cashflow forecasting and providing them with a template for use to submit with their grant application. Since the meeting they have provided further support to the businesses to enable them to complete their plans and cashflows.

InvestSefton's Senior Business Growth Officer sat on the grant assessment panel on 15th July 2024. 5 Early Years applications and 7 WrapAround applications were reviewed, with 1 Early Years application and 5 WrapAround applications being approved. The other applications submitted were incomplete and the Childcare team are advising the businesses of what they need to provide to get their application fully reviewed. The funding has been opened back up again to allow more time for businesses to apply and to enable others who missed the original deadline or who submitted insufficient information to submit/resubmit an application. The next panel review meeting will be on Monday 9th September 2024 when it is anticipated that there will be a far greater number of applications under both wrap around and early years provision to review.

Active Sefton

InvestSefton has used UKSP to help fund health and wellbeing activities for Sefton businesses run by the Active Sefton team. In addition to six companies assisted in the previous quarter the team has since added a further six

From the 12 businesses, there has been an overall engagement of 12 employees accessing Health Checks, Cold Dip, Stress Workshop, 7 Dimensions of Health Workshop, Menopause Café, Online Menopause Groups, Online Legs Bums & Tums and Online 10 Minute Movers.

The Apr-Jun feedback from the employees for the Online Exercise Sessions are as follows:

- 100% increased energy levels
- 92% improvement in social interaction
- 95% increased their mood
- 100% improved concentration levels
- 73% improved physical problems

Case studies

The team continues to engage with businesses as part of its 1:1 delivery support. Recent case studies below:(Names have been anonymised)

An innovation consultancy business in Health & Social care based in Crosby. The business is helping local innovators who need support in advancing their business or getting products to the market. The Business is struggling to market its services to the right audience. InvestSefton supported the Business by providing a review of its website including a comparison to competitors sites for SEO as well as undertaking one to one training with the business on buyer personas and the customer journey.

A local convenience store based in Bootle. The shop is located near a college and a residential area and the business has noticed a gap in their service provision around the lunchtime period, as they do not stock sandwiches and similar goods specifically for the lunchtime trade. In order for them to provide this service they need to purchase a chiller unit but they need funding to do this. InvestSefton supported the Business to apply for a top up loan so that they could purchase the chiller cabinet and as a result enhance their profits particularly through increased lunchtime trade.

Brighton-Le-Sands supplier of workplace drugs and alcohol testing kits and training in the use of the kits. The original services of the business were the provision of first aid kits and PPE to businesses but these have become readily available online so they decided to diversify. The Business does however need marketing support to help them promote their new products and the training. InvestSefton supported the business by reviewing their existing website performance and Seo ranking against competitors and introducing the use of AI to help generate content. InvestSefton also provided support with tender searches and supply chain including an introduction to a supply chain workshop.

Bakery based in Bootle and provides wholesale bread to restaurants and hotels. The Business had struggled to recruit staff especially a trained baker. The Business is also wanting to relocate to shop front premises so that it can diversify its offering and offer Pastries as well as bread. InvestSefton supported the Business with a managed referral to Sefton @ Work as well as reviewing existing marketing on Instagram and looking at current business rates for potential properties for the business.

An aerial photography services company based in Southport. The business is relatively new and is a diversification of services provided by another company owned by the Director. The business specialises in aerial drone photography and thermal imaging photographic services that measure CO2 output pre/post low carbon measures for developers, landlords, estate agencies and public sector agencies. The business is looking to develop their current offer to large commercial developments and public agencies including hospitals, councils and schools for estate management and maintenance purposes or looking towards net zero. InvestSefton supported the Business with developing a business plan that supports business growth and capital investment.

TOURISM

Southport Food & Drink Festival – 31st May, 1st & 2nd June

- The Southport Food and Drink Festival took place on the 31st May until the 2nd of June
- The Event was a huge success with tens of thousands of visitors, this was the biggest Food and Drink Festival since its creation.
- There were also record numbers of Sefton based businesses at the event.
- The knock-on effect of the show was evident with The Towns Car parks full and the town centre notably busy.
- Work will commence soon to plan how the 2025 event will evolve and be bigger and better.

Southport Air Show – 13th & 14th July

- The Southport Air Show took place on the 13th and 14th July.
- The flying display included RAF Red Arrows and Typhoon include many civilian assets.

- The event passed safely with no major incidents, the general feedback from the event has been hugely positive with several event tweaks from 2023.

British Musical Fireworks Championship – 20th & 21st September

- Tickets are now on sale
- The competitors briefing and site visit has taken place at Victoria Park. The Competition Clerk and head judge also attended to talk through the rules of the competition.

MLEC

- Major United Utility Diversion now complete, ahead of schedule, all other utility diversions have also been completed.
- DSM have been selected to carry out the demolition and enabling works after a competitive procurement process.
- DSM have been on site carrying out inspections, survey work and planning conditions work. Site mobilisation is now complete with demolition underway.
- All demolition and enabling work is expected to be complete by early 2025
- Procurement for the main contractor is underway and a contractor will be appointed in September ready to start the main works in 2025.
- ASM continue to be engaged with the process and regular meetings take place to share information and for ASM to feed into all processes.

Property Services

The Property Services Department are a multi-Disciplinary team delivering various services, professional advice and initiatives across the Borough of Sefton. Below are some examples of ongoing pieces of work throughout the department.

Asset Management

- Ongoing work to deliver approved Asset Disposals with further phases being developed for approval.
- Developing a overarching disposal proposal.
- Assisting with the SEND programme.
- Ongoing work supporting Growth Board projects.
- Ongoing work in connection to lease agreements.

Maintenance Management, Building Services & FM

- Facilities Management (FM) moved under the management of Maintenance Management and building Services to improve operational working.
- Delivering a range of schemes in support of Corporate Buildings.
- Delivering a range of schemes in support of Education Capital & SEND programme.
- Delivery of reactive maintenance and statutory compliance services to Corporate and Educational buildings.
- Professional advice and support on a broad range of regeneration programmes.
- Phase 1 essential maintenance delivery plan for corporate buildings progressing with works nearing completion.
- Phase 2 essential maintenance – Funding secured with programme being developed.
- Asset survey delivery plan in train alongside the essential maintenance (this is funded under the essential maintenance programme).
- Delivering services in support of major adaptation to vulnerable and disabled residents.

- Looking at accommodation options to include reception function.
- Developing a phase 2 Corporate Landlord proposal.

Project Management

- Provide professional support to Growth Board on several projects.
- Project delivery for various Education capital & SEND schemes.
- Provide support to other teams on Asset Disposal, Building Maintenance, Asset Management, Energy and Statutory Compliance colleagues.

Energy Management

- Sefton Council Retrofit programme – Providing insulation to privately owned properties.
- A programme of work to support schools (after large energy price rises) is ongoing.
- Sefton have transferred electricity provider. Post 1 April, all Council buildings and streetlights are 100% renewable energy powered – monitoring new contract.
- Energy prices (gas and electricity) continue to be high, due to the government support having been removed. Efficiency savings being considered.
- Work on the next phase of the Climate Emergency programme is progressing.
- Delivering services in support of affordable warmth to residents.