

Committee: Overview & Scrutiny	Date: 4 th November 2014	Classification: Unrestricted	Report No:	Agenda Item:
Report of: Cllr Denise Jones, Overview and Scrutiny Committee		Title: Removing barriers to youth employment – report of the Scrutiny Working Group Progress Report		
Originating Officer(s): Vicky Allen Corporate Strategy and Equality		Ward(s) affected: All		

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 A scrutiny report ‘removing barriers to youth employment’ was taken to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2013 and a six month update report on the progress of recommendations was reviewed in March 2014. At the March meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested further information on several recommendations which had not been fully implemented.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the report findings.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The “removing barriers to youth employment” scrutiny report” went to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2013. The objective of the review was to investigate how the council and its partners could improve the support provided to young people to become work-ready, and helping to remove barriers to their employment. The review identified the importance of apprenticeships as a key route for young people into work. Initial analysis into the apprenticeship offer uncovered complexity within the system which could be confusing. The scrutiny working group therefore chose to focus on apprenticeships. The working group wanted to look at how the council could add value to maximize the apprenticeship agenda to benefit young people within the borough. The review therefore investigated the following areas:

- Understanding the supply of good quality apprenticeships and how this can be stimulated;
- Understanding demand for apprenticeships by young people; and

- Supporting young people to access opportunities and be competitive in the labour market: how can the council add value to this agenda?
- 3.3 The scrutiny review found that the way in which the apprenticeship framework has been established has not helped to make this route into employment either clear or attractive. Many schools, parents and young people themselves have misconceptions about apprenticeships. The review found that the council has a key role to play in providing clear and accessible information which is widely available and publicised. In addition it found that there is a clear need for businesses in the borough to further support young people's career choices and employability by increasing the opportunities for pupils and school leavers to gain access to mentors and by improving their work experience offer.
- 3.4 The scrutiny review welcomed the good work already being undertaken as part of the Employment Strategy and its sub-groups. The review group felt that the council should support this good work by establishing itself as a facilitator and coordinator of apprenticeships, spreading good practice and coordinating the supply and demand in order to maximise benefits for the borough's young people.
- 3.5 The report made 8 recommendations which were agreed by OSC. At its meeting in March 2014, the Committee was advised that the Chair of the working group was pleased with progress on the majority of these actions, namely those in relation to careers and mentoring support given to NEETs; increase in introductory work experience opportunities; raised awareness and perception of the apprenticeship scheme; re-design of the Council's web pages, which now provided information to young people, schools, parents and businesses; and securing additional funding for this by ESCW staff.
- 3.6 As requested by OSC, this report provides a progress update on the following activities which supported the implementation of some recommendations:
- Uptake of services on offer from the Careers Services by free schools and academies;
 - Universal mentoring. At the March OSC meeting, there was a discussion about the practicalities of providing high quality mentoring for all young people, and the committee members made the following suggestions:
 - That high achieving pupils in the Borough might act as mentors for peers in other schools.
 - That employees of the Council or NHS might also act as youth mentors.
 - Whether the sample job descriptions for businesses taking on work experience students had been produced; and
 - Support for businesses to establish a quality offer which can become an accredited apprenticeship.

4. **BODY OF REPORT**

Increase access to independent information, advice and guidance for young people’.

- 4.1 OSC asked for further information on the uptake of services on offer from the Careers Service by free schools and academies. In March OSC heard about the offer for maintained schools but wanted further information about the uptake of Careers provision amongst Free Schools and Academies in order to assess whether all young people were getting the additional support.
- 4.2 Comment from the service: There is good uptake of services from Bethnal Green Academy with 25 days delivery across the academic year from the Careers Service who supports students in Year 9, pupils on option choices, and Year 11 pupils on post-16 transition. There is also additional help for students with Special Needs. In addition the service is providing information on student destinations to support the schools review of their Careers Education inputs. The school take part in Head to Head Sessions, Getting Ahead and work experience organised by the EBP to support the development of employability skills.
- 4.3 City Gateway Free school has taken up 20 days of Careers service input focused on students in Year 9 to Year 11 with specialist input to support young people with Special Needs. There is a link Careers Adviser allocated to the institution to support the transition of their students and destination information is provided for students leaving Year 11.
- 4.4 The Careers Service will be working with Wapping High School (which doesn't currently have any children in Years 10 and 11) to support young people at the school with an Education Health and Care Plan in planning their transition to the next step.
- 4.5 Scrutiny comment: The committee welcomes the careers support being given to young people in City Gateway Free School and Bethnal Green Academy, and the planned work with Wapping High School (which currently does not have any Year 10 and 11 children).

Support the development of a universal mentoring scheme.

- 4.6 At the meeting in March, there was a discussion about the practicalities of providing high quality mentoring for all young people. OSC asked for comments about the two suggestions arising from this discussion:
- That high achieving pupils in the borough might act as mentors for peers in other schools
 - That employees of the Council or NHS might also act as youth mentors.

- 4.7 Comments from the service: The Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership is responsible for providing business mentors to support young people in schools across the borough. Whilst the pre-NEET ESF contract came to an end and is no longer funded, the Careers Service was successful in obtaining a contract under which we mentor young people from the NEET register providing them with Careers Guidance, developing their employability skills and placing them in next step education, training or work. Young people are mentored throughout this process and for 6 months after placement to ensure they sustain the placement.
- 4.8 With regard to employees of the Council acting as youth mentors, this issue will be taken to the Young People and Preparing for Adulthood Group and the Workforce Development service within Human Resources to provide a steer.
- 4.9 Scrutiny comment: The committee is pleased to hear that explorative discussions will take place on an organisational approach to providing opportunities for council officers to mentor young people from the borough. Around 43 per cent of Council staff live in the borough or went to school in the borough so this initiative has the potential to be welcomed and well supported by staff. Providing mentoring support to local young people can help toward future succession planning and may also support the Council's aim to employ a workforce to fully reflect the community. A coordinated offer of support for young people in Years 10 and 11 would also fit well with what we are asking of large businesses in terms of engaging with local people (Fairness Commission recommendation 9).

Work with the Education Business Partnership and businesses to improve the work experience offer for young people at school.

- 4.10 The review group was keen to see the benefits of work experience promoted and it was suggested that the council could draw up some typical job descriptions for work experience to progress with larger and smaller employers, with standardised formats for attainment and final outcomes. At the update meeting in March, OSC asked whether the sample job descriptions for businesses taking on work experience students had been produced.
- 4.11 Comment from the service: The Working Start Programme now has a comprehensive range of trainee job descriptions for a range of sectors (waste management, business and administration, health and childcare, etc.). To ensure consistency in the structure of work placements across the borough the Economic Development Service is making these available to colleagues and partners providing or facilitating work experience placements, and will be making them available as part of all procurement contract advice packages. Education Business Partnership is responsible for the majority of pre-16 work experience placements and provides advice and guidance to business taking on young people, to ensure consistency and quality.

4.12 Scrutiny comment: The committee is pleased to hear that trainee job descriptions are now in place. The review group had heard from some young people who had a negative impression of work experience and the review group felt that these job descriptions would allow young people and businesses to feel that the undertaking was a worthwhile experience. The inclusion of a milestone in this year's strategic plan to develop, in partnership with the Tower Hamlets Education Business Partnership, a clear high quality standard of work experience for young people in school for employers to sign up to is a measure of the importance of this recommendation in supporting young people into sustainable employment.

Increase employment opportunities of young people through introductory work experience.

4.13 At the March meeting, the learning and achievement service said that they were looking to employ a work experience officer and OSC asked for a general update on this action.

4.14 Comment from the service: The Council's procurement process now includes the Economic and Community Benefit table in all contract documentation for contracts over £25k. This template seeks commitments against a variety of short and longer term paid and unpaid work experience opportunities including for Years 11-12, longer term unemployed, those with learning difficulties, and care leavers. The volume and nature of commitment depends upon the type, value and duration of contracts, but even short-term lower value contracts should be able to deliver on work experience opportunities. The projections and achievements against these commitments will be tracked as part of the council-wide reporting on employment and skills delivery: delivered, funded or commissioned by the council.

4.15 Work with Procurement is continuing to develop to deliver consistent and comprehensive advice and guidance to bidders both at tender stage and at delivery stage to ensure they have the support and sign-posting required to deliver on their commitments. One of the key interventions is to ensure that advice and guidance about the expectations around economic and community benefits is included at the PQQ and ITT stages of procurement and that this intervention continues throughout the procurement.

4.16 This work is also being picked up through the Fairness Commission and the development of the Tower Hamlets Business Charter to promote the concepts of: Buy Local, Employ Local, and Support Local.

4.17 Scrutiny Comment: No information about a work experience coordinator was provided, by ESCW, however Scrutiny is pleased to hear about the work experience opportunities which are now embedded into contracts.

Support businesses to improve the quality of the opportunities they offer so they can become accredited apprenticeships.

- 4.18 At the March meeting, OSC expressed the desire to find out more about how the council has supported businesses to improve the quality of their opportunities so that they could become accredited apprenticeships.
- 4.19 Comment from the service: A Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) apprenticeship event is being planned in partnership with the National Apprenticeship Service and should take place towards the end of the year. Skillsmatch is now delivering a targeted pre-apprenticeship training course to ensure that Tower Hamlets young people are ready to apply for apprenticeship opportunities as they become available and to ensure young people have the skills required by local employers.
- 4.20 On a national level the government is implementing changes to the funding regime for apprenticeships, giving employers greater choice over accessing training, whilst relieving potential cash flow issues. LBTH is working with National Apprenticeship Service, chairing the London Councils Apprenticeship Sub Group to support the development of the new employer-led Standards to replace the current unwieldy Frameworks, and will subsequently be supporting businesses in the move to the simpler and more cost-effective access route to apprenticeship recruitment. Information for employers, with signposting to National Apprenticeship Service and other relevant websites is also included on the new LBTH apprenticeship website.
- 4.21 The new, less detailed “Standards” that are being brought in to replace the current Frameworks are being developed by business to reflect their own needs rather than being prescribed by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) - this in itself will enable business to “improve the quality” of what is on offer as the whole purpose of the process is to remove the disconnection between educational requirements as they currently are, and the practical experience/output businesses offer/need. It needs to be remembered that the accreditation comes from the training provider and is based upon completed modules, not from the employer.
- 4.22 Work is being undertaken in partnership with Skillsmatch, the enterprise team and Procurement by using the data collated in regards to contract commitments (including apprenticeship commitments) to: increase and identify local supply chain and labour needs; provide targeted “fit to compete” support to local businesses to enable them to compete for opportunities, and therefore expand their businesses to take on more young people; and to ensure that training is available for local people in the relevant sectors.
- 4.23 Businesses require different support depending upon the sector so the support offered directly by Economic Development is more generic, but the following has

or is being done to improve the quality of placements and provide the necessary support to facilitate completion by the apprentice:

- Support in developing job descriptions that effectively reflect the requirements of the Frameworks as well as the needs of employers – this is provided for any employer calling the Economic Development service to ask for support in recruiting an apprentice;
- Mentor training for employers to enable them to better support the young people to complete their placements - provided at Skillsmatch with support from relevant sector employers experienced in apprenticeships and mentoring provision;
- Development of an agreement between the employers and the training provider; setting out requirements for effective line management, mentoring, communication and monthly review of work plans, college work and progression within the job;
- Rather than re-invent the wheel when we have limited resources we work with NAS (National Apprenticeship Service) and other Apprenticeship Task Group members to develop the TH website information specifically directing employers to existing, relevant and free support from NAS to enable businesses to access the right training providers and develop their own offer;
- A local event proposed for spring 2015 in partnership with NAS to help local businesses understand the new Standards requirements and their own roles in supporting an apprentice, as well changes to funding regimes which will then be in place;
- Development of guidance for procurement to ensure businesses access the correct sector support agencies, such as the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), who offer significant help to employers in setting out expectations, developing their offer to apprentices and in accessing the right training provision.

4.24 Scrutiny comment: The committee is pleased to hear about the national and local initiatives which are supporting businesses on delivering quality apprenticeship opportunities. The committee also welcomes the partnership working between Skillsmatch, Economic Development and Procurement services in using the opportunities provided around the procurement imperatives placed upon major companies working with the Council to help businesses to take on and/or improve their apprenticeship offer. Using the business database e-newsletters and business forums that are planned for delivery this year could be an ideal opportunity to promote this agenda.

4.45 There is a huge improvement on the information provided to businesses on the Council's website. This is found under the 'jobs and careers' section. Providing a link from the 'business support and advice' section on the website to this information would promote the apprenticeship agenda further and the support the Council can provide to businesses wishing to hire apprentices.

5. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

- 7.1 This report describes the review on removing barriers to youth employment Working Group for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 7.2 There are no specific financial implications emanating from this report except for recommendation R2 which would need to be contained within existing budget provision.
- 7.3 In the event that the Council agrees further action in response to this report's recommendations then officers will be obliged to seek the appropriate financial approval before further financial commitments are made in conjunction with Education, Social Care and Wellbeing Directorates as the lead Directorate for Youth Services and also the Council's external youth employment partners.

6. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 8.1 The Council is required by section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000 to have an Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to have executive arrangements that ensure the committee has specified powers. Consistent with this obligation, Article 6 of the Council's Constitution provides that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants and may make reports and recommendations to the Full Council or the Executive in connection with the discharge of any functions. It is consistent with the Constitution and the statutory framework for the Executive to provide a response.
- 8.2 The Council does not have a specific employment power. It has, nevertheless, set out employment-related objectives in its sustainable community strategy for the purposes of section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000 (set out in the Tower Hamlets Community Plan). In order to have a prosperous community in Tower Hamlets, the Council seeks to tackle worklessness and to improve educational aspiration and attainment. The Council has adopted an employment strategy to further these objectives. The Council may take action to pursue these strategies, provided that in doing so it acts in accordance with its statutory functions.
- 8.3 Several of the recommendations in the report are concerned with the provision of information, advice and guidance to young people. This is something that the Council may support. The Council has power under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to specified restrictions and limitations imposed by other statutes. It should be recognised that significant responsibility is given to schools in relation to career advice and guidance.

- 8.4 Section 42A of the Education Act 1997 makes it the responsibility of governing bodies of maintained, secondary schools (and the local authority in relation to pupil referral units which offer secondary education) to secure that pupils are provided with independent careers guidance during the relevant phase of their education. The guidance is required to –
- Be presented in an impartial manner;
 - Include information on options available in respect of 16 to 18 education or training, including apprenticeships; and
 - Be such as the person giving it considers will promote the best of the pupils to whom it is given.
- 8.5 The relevant phase of a pupil's education for such advice begins with the year in which the majority of the pupil's class attain the age of 14 and ends with the year in which the majority of the pupil's class attain the age of 16.
- 8.6 When considering any action to remove barriers to youth employment, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

7. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS

- 9.1 Around 27% of all JSA claimants in the borough are 16-24 years old, and the JSA unemployment rate for this age group is 8.5% which is around two percentage points higher than that of the working population (16-64). Around 5.4 of the London working age population are employed within the borough. The majority of people employed in Tower Hamlets are working in the financial and insurance industries, in business administration and support services, professional services, and information and communication. Apprenticeships, which mix working with training which leads to a recognised qualification, are a good way of enabling young people from the borough to be supported in their transition from school to work.

8. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 8.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the report.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising from the report. Risks relating to the recommendations will be monitored through the council's corporate risk register and directorate risk registers. Risks are assessed for likelihood and impact, and will have responsible owners and programmes mitigating actions.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct implications of crime and disorder as a result of the recommendations of this review.

11. EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

13.1 The scrutiny review group met with council officers and partners to ask them what the council should concentrate on to add value to the apprenticeship agenda. The scrutiny review concluded that by taking a coordination role for the borough through the Employment Strategy, the apprenticeship system would become clearer for young people and more efficient in terms of reducing duplications of services across the borough.

**Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)
List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report**

Brief description of “background papers” Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection.

To be completed by author

To be completed by author ext. xxx

Report authors should refer to the section of the report writing guide which relates to Background Papers when completing this section. Please note that any documents listed in this section may be disclosed for public inspection. Report authors must check with Legal Services before listing any document as ‘background papers’.

12. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Scrutiny Review and Action Plan
