



NHS North Central London

Meeting: CHILDREN'S TRUST BOARD	Date: 24 October 2013	Agenda Item No: 6
---	-------------------------------------	--------------------------

TITLE OF PAPER: Increasing participation and addressing youth unemployment: learning lessons and next steps
--

SUMMARY OF PAPER: The paper updates the Board on key activities of the partnership to increase and broaden opportunities for Barnet's young people as they transition through into employment. In particular, it sets out the recent initiatives of the local authority and Barnet and Southgate College, the lessons learnt through trialling new approaches to engage businesses and young people and how this experience is shaping our future work.

ACTION REQUIRED BY BOARD: The Board is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• note the progress made and lessons learnt,• identify opportunities within their organisations to increase work-based opportunities for young people and

AUTHOR OF PAPER Ian Harrison, Education and Skills Director, Barnet Council David Byrne, Principal, Barnet and Southgate College

**Increasing participation and addressing youth unemployment:
learning lessons and next steps**

Children's Trust Board

1. Context

Barnet's Children and Young People Plan 2013-2016 sets out our partnership ambition to support young people in 'Preparation for Adulthood' where young people are ambitious for their futures and contribute positively to society'. We are measuring our success in meeting this vision through reducing the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) and by increasing the number of young people that achieve a level 2 qualification by the age of 19.

One of the key activities set out to deliver this ambition is to offer 'relevant and tailored learning and employment opportunities'. In developing Barnet's Education Strategy, our partnership identified a need to broaden the range of opportunities available both to support a successful transition into adulthood and to enable young people to become economically independent. Whilst a high proportion of our young people in Barnet stay on at school to continue their studies and a higher proportion go on to university compared with elsewhere, we need to improve the opportunities available to ensure that all young people actively participate in employment, education and/or work related training.

The percentage of young people not actively engaged in education, employment and/or training at any one time is low when compared nationally, however, this percentage translates into around 300 young people aged 16-18 (based on June figures). There is a further cohort of young people for whom we have no confirmed activity and we know that there are a number of young people identified by schools at potential risk of becoming NEET when they leave school. This, together with the emerging evidence of significant churn at the end of year 12 suggests that we need to do more to ensure a broad and accessible offer. This is of particular concern in the light of impending changes to the A level curriculum and the requirements for young people to participate in employment, education or training for longer (Raising Participation Age).

Ensuring young people are ready to access the world of work and that they acquire the right skills and expertise is also crucial to Barnet's plans to grow. Whilst we work and engage with employers and businesses to open up opportunities to young people, education providers in the borough need to ensure that they are equipping young people with the right skills and helping them to become job ready. Schools and colleges now have the responsibility for delivering careers guidance, sharpening the focus on the future employability of students as they go through their school and college career.

Improving opportunities and the employability of young people has been a particular focus of the partnership of schools, the council and Barnet and Southgate College over the last year or so and this paper sets out the learning from our partnership programmes and outlines next steps.

The Board is asked to:

Note the progress made and lessons learnt,
Identify opportunities within their organisations to increase work-based opportunities for young people

2. Local initiatives

Building on the initiatives and activities steered through our 14 -19 partnership group comprising of the local authority, schools, Barnet and Southgate College and alternative provision providers, last year, the council invested £1m to kick-start a specific programme of activity to increase local employment and training opportunities for young people aged 16-24 and to help young people improve and build their employability skills, confidence, motivation and work readiness.

The scheme, known as 'Platforms' was designed to develop a wide range of options and to pilot a number of approaches in order to gauge impact and to evaluate which projects were most successful to take forward. Following consultation with key stakeholders, businesses and young people, 8 work streams were piloted, all designed to tackle youth unemployment and to test and develop sustainable delivery models for future investment.

- Apprenticeships
- Internships
- Prince's Trust for young people needing support to motivate
- Voluntary Sector Placements
- Graduate Support
- 16-24 Employability Support
- Enterprise and Start-up Support
- Support for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD)

Delivery of the projects was developed through partnership and cross-directorate working by the Council, schools, Barnet and Southgate College, local employers, Job Centre Plus and voluntary sector organisations. Some of the funding was used to pump prime a Barnet Apprenticeship Training Agency and to fund research into a Studio School and a Retail Skills Shop.

Barnet and Southgate has also become the first college in London to develop a strategic partnership with REED NCFE which offers its young students (16-19) an exclusive pathway to gain employment within the Barnet area by providing bespoke employment advice and negotiating vacancy opportunities with local and regional employers.

2.1 Key successes of partnership working

- The main aim of the Council's Platforms programme was to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training aged 16-24 years in Barnet. During Phase 1, the JSA claimant count for 18-24 year olds living in Barnet has decreased from June 2012 to June 2013 by 1.1% (approximately 255 young people).
- By the end of July 2013, Platforms had engaged with over 290 young people, with over 160 young people actively participating over the 8 projects. Over 260 employers were engaged with, and of these over 70 employers actively participated with Platforms to boost their staff capacity and to support young people on the programme. 8 Internship and Jobs Mob placements were converted into full apprenticeships, demonstrating the benefits of a 'work trial'.
- Barnet Apprenticeship Agency established and generated 40 vacancies for young people during the period June 2012/13.
- New provision commissioned and open for young people with learning disabilities or difficulties leaving school. There have been 14 new places created in from September 2013 through a partnership between Oak Lodge School and Barnet and Southgate College. The new build due to open in 2014 on the Southgate campus of

the college will offer between 130-180 places and will create approximately 50 new places.

- The REED NCFE programme at Barnet and Southgate College generated over 100 direct part time job outcomes in 2012/13 for its learners.
- The College has developed sector based employer forums for 16-19 year old students which enables employers to directly promote careers and earnings potential and raise awareness of job vacancies.
- Barnet and Southgate College is an apprenticeship ambassador and has been involved with Barnet Schools in promoting the benefits of apprenticeships to young people.

2.2 Learning Lessons from the Platforms Programme

- Apprenticeship opportunities have been the most difficult to fill and very resource intensive for the number of outcomes generated. The low minimum wage for apprenticeships appears to have put off young people aged 19-24 years, maybe due to overhead costs, such as travel. This is a feature common in London. However, we need to consider the types and levels of apprenticeship opportunities to make sure that we learn lessons from elsewhere in the country which have similar employment patterns where the take up of apprenticeships has been high.
- There has been a lack of interest in the enterprise support element of the Platforms offer, something reflected at a national level, potentially due to the economic climate and lack of confidence in starting a business at a young age. However, given the high number of small businesses in Barnet, we need to consider what support young people need to encourage more to join this local enterprise economy.
- Projects aimed at the harder to reach young people found it challenging to encourage take up among young people who lack motivation or face significant personal barriers to work including housing, family and mental health issues.
- Some young people were not job ready so required not only motivational support, but also intensive employability skills, which were provided by the Skills and Enterprise Adviser. Working directly with the young people and the associated business engagement and support is resource intensive.
- Most successful and popular elements of the Platforms projects were the paid Internships, the Princes Trust projects helping to motivate young people and voluntary sector funded work placements offering nine month placements for young people from the more deprived parts of the borough.
- There are a plethora of initiatives in place and emerging offered through a variety of routes. For example, DWP Day One, DWP graduate support projects, ESF project and the extension of New Enterprise Allowance. There are also a number of ESF and Youth Contract funded projects aimed at NEETs and young people at risk of becoming NEET which are also vying for referrals. It will be important going forward to tie in with National Initiatives being developed and include the flexibility to adapt projects to avoid duplication and achieve best value for spend on projects. Young people and employers find it difficult to navigate their way through.
- It is important to distinguish between DWP led provision and provision delivered by schools and colleges, in some cases a lack of clarity around the purpose and outcomes of programmes is leading to perceptions of competition and duplication when programmes may have very different goals and outcomes for young people.

- Some employers, initially interested in securing an apprentice are put off and confused by the range of requirements and paperwork demands as well as the need to go through the National Apprenticeship website/portal. We need to ensure local employers are aware of benefits of the Barnet Apprenticeship Agency and the support available through this route.

2.3 Sustainability

- The Council continues to support the development of apprenticeships through the Barnet Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA) which was pump primed to become self-sustaining. On the back of the successful support for businesses, the Council has also won funding through London Councils from the National Apprenticeship Service, for a new project working with businesses to create apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds up to February 2014.
- Several of the voluntary sector organisations are seeking funding to retain their young person following the end of the 9 month placement and a number of the internship placements have converted into apprenticeships or extended placements. We will explore innovative and creative funding models to build on this success.
- Job Centre Plus continues to work closely with partners to provide a referral mechanism for NEET young people who are eligible for benefits onto suitable projects. Jobcentre Plus also continues to provide support for graduates through the Sector Based Work Academy
- Good examples of partnership working have been established through the Princes Trust projects working with Greenwich Leisure and Saracen's, providing positive destinations for some of the harder to reach and more challenging young people. The Prince's Trust project is being supported for a further year and we are seeking other sources of funding for further motivational programmes for young people.
- Other projects have now established the right structures and approach in order to be in a strong position to bid for alternative funding sources. For example, Dimensions have received core funding to deliver support for young people with LDD and the Work Pairing project.
- Barnet and Southgate College has won the opportunity to manage the corporate training operations and deliver its own retail and catering training (including JCP) at the Hospitality Guild's new "Hospitality House" venue in Finchley from October 2013.
- Barnet and Southgate College has received Retail Academy status for North London and will be delivering a range of Retail training from pre-employment programmes to Apprenticeships and Higher level retail management qualifications. The Retail Skills shop will be located within Hospitality House, capitalising on the synergies that exist across the hospitality and retail employment sectors.
- The Retail Skills shop will be promoted as a centre of excellence to retail employers and will directly support the council's regeneration programme programmes at Brent Cross.
- The College has also developed and is now starting to roll out Traineeships to local participating employers which will lead to full apprenticeship pathways.

4. Next steps

To incorporate the lessons learned so far in developing future activity across the partnership through:

- Identifying potential funding opportunities to sustain and develop the most successful elements of the Platforms project: paid internships, the Princes Trust projects and voluntary sector funded work placements
- Promoting the creation of apprenticeships within the Barnet economy, including leading through example within the council, other public sector organisations and their associated supply chains
- Supporting schools in the early preparation of young people for apprenticeships and the world of work through for example, expanding apprenticeship clubs in schools, promoting the benefit of work trials to young people, supporting and improving information, advice and guidance in schools through sharing best practice
- Developing a studio school/ university technical college to broaden the offer for pupils aged 14-19 to engage earlier in a more focussed vocational/work based curriculum – with the aim of submitting an application to the DfE in May 2014.
- Working with businesses and employers to translate their workforce needs through to schools to ensure schools are able to guide young people appropriately
- Fostering the collaboration between schools and colleges to provide a curriculum offers that provides a smooth transition from school to college. (e.g. extending the new collaborative 6th form between 4 schools and Barnet and Southgate College)
- Fostering relationships with the business community and promoting the benefits of employing young people. Helping businesses to acknowledge that young people, particularly in the harder to reach cohort may need more support in the early stages of their placements
- Exploiting opportunities available through government funded schemes (e.g. ESF and Youth Contract) to ensure services are directed effectively to those Barnet young people who will most benefit. (The Risk of NEET indicator (RONI) will provide data that will enable a more effective matching of young people to appropriate provision.)
- Testing whether there is a need for, and if so, develop a plan to clarify opportunities for businesses to host apprenticeships, internships and work placements, as employers are overwhelmed by the options presented to them through different organisations.

Ian Harrison, Education and Skills Director, London Borough of Barnet
David Byrne, Principal, Barnet and Southgate College

October 2013