

ITEM NO: 4

Supporting skills and employment in Barnet, with a focus on young people not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

REPORT OF: The Leader of the Council

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE OF REPORT:

- The number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Barnet is below regional and national averages and the borough performs well compared with statistical neighbours.
- However, the number of young people whose status is 'not know' is high and the economic climate creates cause for concern. As such, supporting young people into employment remains a top priority for the council and its local partners.
- Barnet is well placed to respond strongly to the NEETs agenda, with a diverse selection of training providers, a vibrant community sector and a large business sector present in the borough.
- Enhancing the employment prospects for young people in Barnet who are NEET cannot be tackled by, or be the responsibility of, any one organisation. Initiatives to support young people into work benefit from a partnership-led approach where vision, ideas, innovations, insight, best practice and, where appropriate, resource is shared as part of a coordinated response.

INPUT REQUESTED FROM BARNET PARTNERSHIP BOARD:

Members of the Board are asked to consider:

- **What their organisations are doing individually to support the NEETs and wider employment agenda, and where this support would benefit from input from and collaboration with partners;**
- **Areas where a greater focus on joint working – in terms of sharing ideas and knowledge, best practice, support with marketing and communications and the sharing of contacts – would create added value;**
- **Areas where support might overlap and where programmes and initiatives would benefit from greater coordination from partners; and**
- **Opportunities – either now or in the future – for combining resources to support this agenda, to generate efficiencies to help resources go further and to create the environment for a coordinated, Barnet-wide response.**

CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Andrew Nathan, Chief Executive's Service

Detail:

The number of young people in Barnet who are 'NEET'

In recent years, the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) in Barnet has been steadily falling and remains below regional and national averages (see supporting paper on NEETs). However, economic conditions have contributed to the NEET figure rising again, which creates concern about:

- The potential growth of the NEET figure as a consequence of the economic climate;
- the high number of young people who's status is 'not known' – some 17% of 16-19 year olds, which is above the national average;
- an increase in the percentage of longer-term NEETs; and
- an increase in the number of younger people aged 16 – 24 who are JSA claimants.

2. Although Barnet's performance in tackling NEETs remains strong – and the borough compares favourably with statistical neighbours – there is more that the council, working with its local public and third sector partners and the business community, can do to tackle the issue. This remains a top priority for the council.

Work in Barnet to reduce young people who are NEET

3. As the paper sent to Budget and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March sets out (included as background), the council has a number of programmes and initiatives in place to support young people into employment – through its integrated Youth Support Service, Positive Activities Programme in schools, and support to young people through the September Guarantee.

4. In addition, the council will ensure that it receives its fair share of the £1bn set aside by **central government** over the next three years to increase the participation of 16 -24 year olds in education, training and work, as well as ensuring that **European funding** is used to benefit Barnet residents. This includes cash payments to encourage employers to recruit young people; extra incentive payments for employers to take on young people as apprentices; extra support through Jobcentre Plus in the form of weekly (rather than fortnightly) signing-on meetings, more time to talk to an adviser and a National Careers Service interview; and funding for 16 and 17 year old persistent NEETS to get them learning, on an apprenticeship or in a job with training.

Supporting young people into employment – a partnership approach

5. In recognition of the level of importance that the council places on supporting young people into work and continuing to reduce the number of NEETs in the borough, additional funding was set aside in the council's budget this year to support 'service priorities'. A proportion of this resource will be used to fund a targeted package of support to help young people into work and provide businesses with financial support to overcome some of the barriers they face to taking on a young person. A package of investment, to be delivered with the support of local partners, is being finalised and will be announced in June.

6. Enhancing the employment prospects for our NEETs cannot be tackled by, or be the responsibility of, any one organisation. Initiatives to support NEETs can only be successful if they are implemented and delivered with the combined input and support from local partners. Barnet is in a strong position to respond to this agenda – with a vibrant and diverse community sector, an excellent College and University and a large business sector.

7. There is much going on across the borough already to support this agenda, through programmes, events, workshops, training and support to increase the employment prospects of the borough's young people.

8. Members of the Board are asked to consider and discuss:

- **What their own organisations are doing individually to support the NEETs and wider employment agenda, and where this support would benefit from input from and collaboration with partners;**
- **Areas where a greater focus on joint working – either in terms of sharing ideas and knowledge, joint support with marketing and communications and the sharing of contacts – would create added value;**
- **Any areas where support might overlap and where programmes and initiatives would benefit from greater coordination from partners; and**
- **Opportunities – either now or in the future – for combining resources to support this agenda, to generate efficiencies to help resources go further and to create the environment for a coordinated, Barnet-wide response.**