

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Task and Finish Group



PLYMOUTH
CITY COUNCIL

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel scrutinises matters relating to the Place Directorate and monitors performance against relevant city and council priorities.

The policy and business areas that relate to the above directorate which are of particular concern to the Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel include:

- Development and Regeneration
- Planning
- Transport
- Strategic Housing
- Economic Development
- Sustainability and Climate Change

One of the issues considered by the panel is the increasing problem of youth unemployment in the City. This issue was prioritised by the panel following a motion on notice submitted to Full Council on 5 December 2011.

The Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel received an update on the effects of the current economic climate on opportunities for young people at its meeting on 17 October 2011 and following approval from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board a task and finish group was convened in March/ April 2012.

This report summarises the findings of the task and finish group review and makes recommendations for improvements.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The scope of this review encompassed the rising numbers of youth unemployment in Plymouth, between the ages of 16 – 24 years, which had reached a level of paramount concern to the Council and the local community. In undertaking the review it was important to the group to ensure that local strategies and plans currently in place to help Plymouth's young unemployed were reviewed to help identify any gaps or additional interventions that could be put in place to provide more opportunities.

The task and finish group worked to add value and avoid duplication by addressing the short to medium term rather than longer term plans and objectives. The panel were pleased with the majority of its findings and were of the opinion that youth unemployment was seen to be an important issue in Plymouth, in both the private and public sector, however considered that a nominated lead was required to drive forward the assessment of youth unemployment as there were considered to be too many groups duplicating work.

Following a thorough review and analysis of all the evidence provided, the panel identified a number of recommendations which were deemed to offer suggested improvements that would further benefit Plymouth in tackling youth unemployment.

3. SCRUTINY APPROACH

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board approved in principle on 14 December 2011, the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to review the issue of youth unemployment in Plymouth with a cross-party membership drawn from the Growth and Prosperity and Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

3.1 Task and Finish Group Objectives

The group was asked to scrutinise the issue of youth unemployment in relation to reviewing the following:

- the latest youth unemployment figures and their location across the city;
- current employment or training programmes across the city and their take up (including barriers such as accessibility);
- leading employers currently engaged with existing programmes and what can be done to encourage more;
- the current apprenticeship schemes in place, and their occupational classification and whether they are leading to permanent employment opportunities;
- arrangements for encouraging and supporting quality apprenticeship placements;
- the Council's approach to employing apprentices and providing work experience placements;
- current provision by other public sector providers;
- business links with education and training providers with regard to employability skills;

With the overall aim to make recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board regarding tackling youth unemployment figures in Plymouth.

The Project Initiation Document (PID) is attached as Appendix I.

3.2 Task and Finish Group Membership

The Task and Finish Group had cross party membership comprising the following members –

- Councillor Nicholson (Chair)
- Councillor Coker
- Councillor Ken Foster
- Councillor Stark
- Councillor Tuohy
- Councillor Williams
- Jacki Williams – Co-optee (Job Centre Plus)
- Ashley Beare –Co-optee (SW TUC & PABC)
- Richard Smith – Co-optee (Plymouth Chamber)

For the purposes of the review, the Task and Finish Group was supported by -

- Gill Peele, Business Manager for Development
- Mark Looker, Worklessness Co-ordinator
- Chris Grace, Head of Economic Development
- Helen Rickman, Democratic Support Officer

3.3 Task and Finish Group Methodology

The Task and Finish Group convened over several days on 7 March 2012, 4 April 2012, 10 April 2012 and 12 April 2012 to consider evidence and hear from witnesses, review background information and undertake observations by way of an informal group discussion.

Witnesses invited:

- Eve Skuse (Head of Organisational Development, Plymouth City Council)
- Bob Harrison (Employer Accounts Manager, National Apprenticeship Service)
- Pete Nash (Headteacher Support Professional, Plymouth Association of Primary Headteachers)
- Ken Holder (Apprentice Co-ordinator, Plymouth City Council)
- A selection of young people

Background material and documentation:

- Project Initiation Document
- Written submission from the Principal of City College Plymouth
- Briefing report on youth unemployment

Information gathering sessions:

- At Devonport Welcome Hall – 10 April 2012

3.4 Contextual Overview

In order to aid members of the task and finish group, Mark Looker, Worklessness Coordinator, provided the group with a briefing report on youth unemployment statistics in Plymouth. Officers were available at all meetings to provide verbal advice.

4. KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE EVIDENCE

The task and finish group was presented with various forms of evidence and the key issues outlined, as separated by meeting date, are presented as follows:

4.1 Information from 7 March 2012 meeting included:

In attendance at the first task and finish group meeting were Mark Looker (Worklessness Coordinator) and Chris Grace (Head of Economic Development).

The following key issues were raised –

- (a) a variety of opportunities for young people experiencing worklessness were available from a variety of sources including Plymouth City Council, JobCentrePlus, the Work Programme Providers, Enterprise Plymouth, YTKO amongst others; these included apprenticeships, work experience placements and training opportunities;

- (b) both the City College Plymouth and Plymouth University were praised as providing help for graduates and skills training to those in need of further development;
- (c) it was important for the Council to balance opportunities for young people and the needs of current members of staff facing possible redundancy;
- (d) an internal working group had been set up in the Council to assess worklessness and identify how the council itself can play a role in alleviating it.
- (e) it was considered that there was not a clear and concise approach to tackling youth unemployment as several working groups had been formulated across the city to assess this issue and sometimes therefore work was disjointed and often repetitive;
- (f) several businesses were focusing on staying 'afloat' rather than concentrating on employing people or offering work experience opportunities;
- (g) a supermarket in Plymouth was known to be sending some employees on a month's training regime to teach them basic numeracy/ literacy skills – this was considered to be a poor reflection of the current education system;
- (h) there were several graduates in Plymouth who were filling job positions that they were overqualified for and therefore not achieving their potential and also preventing other job seekers accessing those roles;
- (i) younger people were not getting the opportunity to gain experience from having weekend/ evening jobs as these positions were being filled by graduates and other job seekers; it was considered that the opportunities were no longer available
- (j) not all young people claiming Job Seekers Allowance with Jobcentre Plus are ready to experience work or work experience as basic skills were lacking;
- (k) employment advisors working for JobCentrePlus, work with employers to find skills/job opportunities. Young people aged 18-24 are supported by a dedicated team of advisers.;
- (l) the Council was only able to take on those undertaking work experience for an eight week period in line with the national DWP scheme – the scheme can be extended to 12 weeks if leading to an apprenticeship;
- (m) a lot of Government initiatives were published with very short notice; this left officers and partners unable to properly prepare and bid for initiatives tackling youth unemployment;
- (o) young people were provided with guidance from JobCentrePlus on how to prepare for an interview and to be punctual and of smart appearance;
- (p) there were a number of providers in the city that offered help to young people in writing CVs , applying for jobs and with employability skills;
- (q) education was considered to be target driven and children were taught to pass exams rather than learn about a diverse range of subjects and experiences that increase employability;

- (r) youth worklessness could also be exacerbated by generational worklessness in families; the culture of negative attitude towards working needed to be addressed;
- (s) it was important that tackling youth unemployment was done via a holistic approach to young people and families;
- (t) there was considered to be a 'knock-on effect' when graduates were under-skilling themselves by taking jobs that those without a degree would normally fill;

4.2 Information from 4 April 2012 meeting included:

The following witnesses were present at the 4 April 2012 task and finish group meeting -

- Eve Skuse
- Ken Holder
- Pete Nash
- Bob Harrison

The key issues that were raised included –

- (a) only 5% - 10% of employers were committed to taking on apprentices;
- (b) a grant of £1500 was made available to businesses that were committed to taking on an apprentice;
- (c) apprentices needed to meet the needs of an employer, they have the ability to grow with a company as it develops;
- (d) Plymouth City Council started to take on apprentices in 2009; the Council has a target of recruiting 100 apprentices however 33 apprentices have been through the process so far;
- (e) Bob Harrison was working with the Council's HR department as well as the Economic Development department to help with the apprenticeship scheme;
- (f) two sectors in the economy that are poor at keeping on apprentices were construction and hair dressing & beauty; an apprentice was unable to become self employed until the apprenticeship had been completed;
- (g) a web page was made available to publish apprenticeship vacancies; young people were required to access the site and register; approximately 7000 people had registered on the web page so far and 6% were under 16 years old;
- (h) of the £1500 grant to employers, £750 was paid in the first eight weeks; the final payment was made at the end of the 12 month period;
- (i) schools had a responsibility through legislation to promote apprenticeships as well as academic courses;

- (j) more Plymouth businesses needed to be encouraged to take on apprentices;
- (k) two separate events have been held across the city to advertise and promote apprenticeships; it was considered that the perception of apprenticeships was out of date and needed to be addressed;
- (l) some apprentices were forced to withdraw from the scheme as they were unable to afford to travel to work;
- (m) Bob Harrison was having to spend more time with some apprentices who had not gained basic qualifications at school;
- (n) schools were required to provide, as part of their core business, basic skills to children however it was important that aspirations were discussed in order to encourage children to think about their future and opportunities available to them;
- (o) schools could be used as a platform for creating apprenticeships;
- (p) a recent Ofsted report published stated that 20% of children were below average in their reading ability;
- (q) someone needed to drive forward the issue of raising opportunities at a primary school level; a coordinated approach was required from all;
- (r) it was noted that the Council was unable to alter the national curriculum or how it was taught in schools however there was an opportunity for the learning experience of children in Plymouth's schools to be enhanced in order to increase employability.

4.3 Informal Discussion Group Observations

The task and finish group initiated an informal meeting on 10 April 2012 with a collection of young people that were either employed, on an apprenticeships scheme, unemployed or on work experience or with the work programme. The key issues observed during these site visits included –

- some of the young people present looked for jobs on smart phones and send their CVs to employers via this device;
- young people considered they didn't often receive any feedback from job applications/ interviews;
- only 40% of vacancies were actually advertised at Job Centre. Can we get all employers to at least advertise their job there even if they do not want the Job Centre to do the recruitment;
- can the Job Centre do more to help young people job search? Could they sieve the notified vacancies for those that are appropriate and send to them?
- If living independently, cannot work part time as will lose Housing Benefit etc.
- some young people tried circulating a CV but most employers said that they advertise their vacancies on-line if they have any and are not interested in speculative CVs
- there was a dis-connect between National Apprenticeships, Training providers and employers

- some Job Centre Advisers are better than others and are more proactive in providing support;
- it was considered that a lot of jobs don't get advertised and are filled by word of mouth;
- it was felt that better co-ordination between organisations in terms of information advice and guidance was necessary, as well as co-ordination of apprenticeships in the public sector (not just aimed at PCC).
- some of the young people felt that they were not prepared for work or looking for work when they leave education – employability module or skills should come into play at an earlier age.
- online job applications were often confusing and time consuming;
- feedback that two girls present at the meeting did not do well at GCSE level as they were not properly engaged by their teachers – they considered the focus to be upon the 'smarter' children and they were themselves side-lined;
- schools are driven by sending individuals to University – other options are not discussed
- schools don't provide the support needed; they are only interested in students passing exams

Feedback on Apprenticeship Scheme at Plymouth City Council:

- when I first started my apprenticeship my manager didn't know what to expect;
- there wasn't clear guidance given, the manager thought that I would know what needs doing but instead I looked to my manager for guidance;
- guidance needs to be given to make sure Managers know what is required, there didn't seem to be any co-ordination – maybe more planning is required.

4.4 Information from 12 April 2012 meeting included:

The task and finish group met on 12 April to discuss general findings and work towards formulating recommendations.

- (a) it was considered to be important for more job vacancies to be submitted to a central pool such as JobCentrePlus as they could then better co-ordinate advertisement and young people would know where to look for work opportunities. However, it was recognised that many young people use multiple (electronic) platforms to search for and apply for work.
- (b) there was a negative stigma connected with JobCentrePlus; some people stereotyped this organisation as being where you only go to collect your benefits/welfare payments;
- (c) there was a perception from young people that job vacancies were filled 'in-house' and were not advertised correctly;
- (d) some young people applied for jobs but were told they didn't get the job due to lack of experience; it was then questioned how young people could gain experience without being given an opportunity in the first place;

- (e) JobCentrePlus was the second biggest jobs bank in the world;
- (f) jobs should be better signposted on websites to allow people to navigate websites easier;
- (g) young people were getting demoralised when receiving no response from job applications;
- (h) looking for jobs and filling out job applications was considered to be very time consuming;
- (i) it was considered that the National Careers Service website was very good;
- (j) the Growth Board holds to account the Worklessness Sub Group;
- (k) the idea of a 'champion' for youth unemployment issues was considered to be important;
- (l) Members of Parliament needed to be better involved in this issue and promote the importance of youth employment opportunities;
- (m) employers and education establishments needed to be co-ordinated along with the Council and private sector organisations;
- (n) the schools forum needed to be involved in highlighting the issue of youth unemployment in Plymouth;
- (o) apprenticeships at Plymouth City Council needed to be better organised – the feedback from the young person discussion group highlighted that better direction was needed from managers;
- (p) apprenticeships were considered to be important however they were not the only option available for young people who wanted to get a job or further their training

5. FINDINGS

In reviewing the evidence and analysing all of the data provided the panel identified a number of points of concern which included:

5.1 Duplication

It was made clear at the first meeting of the task and finish group that the issue of youth unemployment was being discussed by a variety of organisations/sectors and that efforts to address and tackle this issue were being duplicated.

The group felt that a common consensus was required from all organisations involved in tackling this issue and that a 'lead' role should be formulated to drive this forward.

5.2 Opportunities and Initiatives

Several opportunities were made available for those between the ages of 18 – 24 experiencing unemployment. The following organisations provided the following opportunities:

Jobcentre Plus

- ‘Get Britain Working’ involves Work Experience placements, sector based work academies, work and enterprise clubs, volunteering and job seeking assistance;
- Work Programme delivered by Working Links and Prospects (via Groundworks Trust and Tomorrows People) involves more in depth work with the long term unemployed for up to a period of 2 years;
- Youth Contract is targeted at young people and intends to increase the number of work experience placements and provide subsidies to employers who take on a young person from the work programme or a SME who takes on their first apprentice.

City College Plymouth

- Range of qualifications from NVQ’s to Foundation Degrees across wide variety of Sectors
- Preparation for work programs for NEET’s (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and other young people;
- Provide work experience and volunteer opportunities
- One of the routes in to apprenticeships provided by the college’s Learning Warehouse, dealing with approximately half of Plymouth’s apprentices
- Theworkspace is an area set aside for self-employment learning and guidance, as well as careers guidance

The Training Provider Network (Umbrella for a range of providers in the region)

- Range of training courses of NVQ standard
- Provide links with Jobcentre for Job Clubs
- Work experience placements and apprenticeships can be offered, dependent on the member organisation

Community and Social Action Plymouth (CASAP) (umbrella for third sector organisations in Plymouth)

- Apprenticeships scheme in place for voluntary and social enterprise organisations
- Volunteer placements offered via Plymouth Guild Volunteer Centre

Princes Trust

- Enterprise programme aimed at helping young people start a business
- Programmes involving a mix of personal development, basic skills qualifications and work experience

Coastnet

- Offers basic skills qualifications
- Ongoing media project offering media skills to young people

Real Ideas Organisation

- Offers volunteering opportunities
- Skills training
- Social enterprise qualifications, all aimed at young people

Plymouth City Council

- Has an apprenticeship scheme in place, providing a range of apprenticeships
- Encourages contractors to provide apprenticeships at their own sites, for example at Weston Mill
- Provision of Work Experience placements in conjunction with JobCentrePlus
- Volunteer opportunities offered
- Graduate Placements and Internships offered
- Urban Enterprise Scheme
- Flexible Support Fund - with a scheme focusing on moving young people closer to work
- Commissioning work involving Information Advice and Guidance for young people via The Zone and Careers Southwest
- Commissioning work around Big Lottery Fund to improve young people's circumstance around tenancy and understanding finance to allow them to move closer to work
- Access to Information Technology for job search purposes
- Signposting to relevant organisations
- Worklessness support services mapping exercise in Whitleigh - being undertaken by UoP student
- Providing links into the community for partner organisations to enable work clubs
- Community partnership work via NRT in Housing Services

5.3 Education and Engagement

The group heard from witnesses that some school leavers were leaving education without the required basic skills to give them a fair opportunity at gaining education, training or employment. Time then had to be spent bringing these individuals up to basic numeracy and literacy skills. It was considered that employers should do more to engage with young people from an early age, and particularly those in deprived or troubled circumstances, in order to increase employability skills and awareness of the requirements of the world of work. Better engagement between employers and education was needed.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The task and finish group agreed that it is recommended that –

I. Citywide Leadership

- (a) There are many groups that meet both internally within Plymouth City Council and externally with Partners regarding the skills or employability agenda. The panel wishes to strongly endorse the leadership role of the Plymouth Growth Board with its Worklessness sub group and requests that Cabinet asks the Assistant Director for Economic Development to review the membership to ensure it is relevant to youth unemployment, and to reiterate the primacy on employability matters rests here.

- (b) It is further recommended that future scrutiny arrangements include progress reports from the Worklessness Sub Group and that the scrutiny constitution continues to promote joint panels on this issue.
- (c) The panel wishes to recommend that a councillor not within cabinet be appointed to perform the role of Champion for Youth Employment in the city and to help ensure that recommendations in this report are delivered.

2. Improving support to Youth unemployed

- (a) It is recommended that the Worklessness Sub-group should ensure improved communication of training and employment opportunities to young people by establishing how employers and agencies such as JobCentrePlus can work more closely together. This should include all organisations and businesses being encouraged, via the Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Business and Plymouth Area Business Council to place job and training advertisements with the Job Centre, as well as progressing their usual recruitment procedures. This can be in the form of a signposting notice and does not mean they have to use the Job Centre to undertake their recruitment.
- (b) There should be greater engagement between employers and schools to overcome the apparent gap in skills when young people move from education to work. It is recommended that the Worklessness sub group and the council's internal departments engage with the Schools Forum, Association of School Governors, employers and work programme providers to forge greater working relationships and understanding for the future. It is recommended that an interactive seminar be arranged to be hosted by the Council.

3. Plymouth City Council Apprenticeship Scheme

- (a) Although significant progress has been made in the last year with the numbers of apprenticeship opportunities being offered by Plymouth City Council, there is a need to improve the coordination and governance of the scheme. This should include the HR department looking at increasing the scope of apprenticeships available within the organisation, and the identification of the support that both apprentices and managers require.
- (b) It is recommended that the Apprenticeship Co-ordinator post be extended beyond the current twelve month period. This will allow a central point of contact for all apprenticeships within the Council and allow existing development of good practice to continue.
- (c) The panel noted that the apprenticeships offered at the moment are supernumerary to the workforce establishment and do not currently offer permanent employment. It is recommended that the Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development review this policy in accordance with organisational constraints.

4. Initiatives

The panel welcomed opportunities for proactive initiatives in support of the creation of employment and/or training opportunities for young people in Plymouth. The Worklessness Sub group should establish a task and finish group to implement a “1,000 jobs in 1,000 companies” initiative to get that many young people into employment and/or work experience over the next 2 years.

Request for Scrutiny Work Programme Item

1	Title of Work Programme Item	Youth Unemployment in Plymouth
2	Responsible Director (s)	Anthony Payne, Director for Place Carol Burgoyne, Director for People
3	Responsible Officer Tel No.	David Draffan, Assistant Director for Economic Development Colin Moore, Assistant Director for Lifelong Learning
4	Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Cabinet Member for Planning, Strategic Housing and Economic Development/ Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
5	Objectives	<p>Youth unemployment has risen to over one million in the UK. Here in Plymouth, unemployment for 18 – 24 year olds has risen to a level which causes concern to the Council and local community.</p> <p>The task and finish will review local strategies and plans currently in place to help Plymouth’s young unemployed and to help identify any gaps or additional interventions that can be put in place to provide more opportunities for them to gain places in work or training.</p> <p>The task and finish will acknowledge the Council’s Worklessness Plan and the current workstreams of the city’s Growth Board Worklessness Sub Group. It will seek to add value and avoid duplication by addressing the short to medium term rather than longer term plans and objectives</p> <p>To achieve this, the key objectives will be to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the latest youth unemployment figures and their location across the city • Review current employment or training programmes across the city and their take up (including barriers such as accessibility) • Review leading employers currently engaged with existing programmes and what can be done to encourage more • Review the current apprenticeship schemes in place, and their occupational classification and whether they are leading to permanent employment opportunities • Review arrangements for encouraging and supporting quality apprenticeship placements; • Review the Council’s approach to employing apprentices • Review current provision by other public sector providers • Review business links with education and training providers with regard to employability skills

6	Who will benefit?	Young people will have access to a wider range of opportunities. Businesses will benefit from the skills and engagement of young people. Councillors will be assured of a coherent framework in place between providers and organisations across the city to ensure the optimum potential for work and training opportunities for young people.
7	Criteria for Choosing Topics (see table at end of document)	THE TOPIC WAS RAISED AT FULL COUNCIL ON 5 TH DECEMBER 2011 MOTION ON NOTICE NO 15 (11/12)
8	What will happen if we don't do this review?	Plymouth has an above average youth employment rate and an over reliance on the public sector. The recession and threats to local jobs will only increase the pressure and competition for work. As Plymouth seeks to achieve its vision for growth we need to ensure that young people are engaged and have appropriate skills to match the needs of future employers. Apprenticeships are a strong option for the continued education and training of many young people in the city. The schemes offer viable opportunities for key industries to recruit and develop new talent. If this review isn't carried out, the council misses the opportunity to directly challenge local strategic decision makers and businesses to provide a good range of employment and training opportunities.
9	What are we going to do?	Task and finish group involving meetings to be completed by the end of March 2012.
10	How are we going to do it? (witnesses, site visits, background information etc.)	Background information, witnesses, review existing plans.
11	What we won't do.	This review will focus on the general issue of opportunities for young people 18 – 24 yrs. It will not consider adult unemployment above this age.
12	Timetable & Key Dates	The first scoping meeting will take place early to mid January 2012. Further meetings will be arranged with a final report and recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board by end March 2012
13	Links to other projects or initiatives / plans	Children and Young People's Plan Local Economic Strategy Worklessness Plan Growth Board and Worklessness Sub group
14	Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel / Membership if Task and Finish Group (to be decided by OSP before submission to OMB)	Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

15	Where will the report go? Who will make the final decision	Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, Cabinet , Growth Board and LSP.
16	Resources (staffing, research, experts, sites visits and so on)	Lead Officer, Growth & Prosperity OSP Lead Officer, Democratic Support Officer
17	Is this part of a statutory responsibility on the panel?	No
18	Should any other panel be involved in this review? If so who and why?	This requires a joint task and finish with Growth & Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Childrens and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel
19	Will the task and finish group benefit from co-opting any person(s) onto the panel.	Yes. Representative members will be sought from key organisations and providers such as the Plymouth Chamber of Commerce, JobCentre Plus, National Apprenticeship Scheme, The Federation of Small Businesses
20	How does this link to corporate priorities?	By nurturing young talent, organizations and sectors develop a stronger local workforce. This will not only support the future Growth of the City and the Raising Aspiration agenda, but will improve inclusivity .