

GROWTH AND PROSPERITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

21 November 2012



PLYMOUTH
CITY COUNCIL

Youth Unemployment - Update

Following the Cabinet report of 12 July 2012 on Youth Unemployment, four recommendations were agreed and this report describes the actions that have been completed to address them.

As background, the Cabinet report was informed by the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, which was established 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.

This report describes the actions taken across the four Cabinet recommendations:

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 (recently renamed the Employment 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 that the primacy on employability matters rests here.

Action Completed:

The Economic Development Department, together with Education, Learning and Families, has completed a review of Council managed groups that consider Youth Unemployment issues and found that duplication of interest and work was indeed occurring. The memberships of these groups has been reviewed and recommendations have been made to add some key people to the Employment Sub Group (formerly the Worklessness Sub Group) to strengthen and add value to this important sub group of the Plymouth Growth Board. A review report is near completion and this will be discussed with the Employment Sub Group prior to implementation for when the Group next meets on 19 December.

- (b) It is further recommended that future scrutiny arrangements include progress reports from the Employment Sub Group and that the scrutiny constitution continues to promote joint panels on this issue.

Action Completed:

This has been noted by the Employment Sub Group and this is its first progress report, along with the information at Appendix I.

- (c) The panel wishes to recommend that a Councillor who is not a Cabinet Member 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.

Action Completed:

Councillor Danny Damarell is now the city's Champion for Youth Employment. Cllr Damerell is a member

of the Employment Sub Group and is consulted on and receives regular updates on its work.

2. Improving support to youth who are unemployed

(a) It is recommended that the Employment 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.

Action Completed:

The Employment Sub Group is a forum where any issues that impact on employment in the city can be discussed. The specific difficulties faced by young people have been discussed here on more than one occasion and the membership does include JobCentrePlus and providers for the Work Programme. The Employment Sub Group continues to encourage employers to advertise job and training opportunities through JobCentrePlus. For example, a call for job applications to the new Money Centre call centre has been supported through a partnership including JobCentrePlus, the City College and the City Council. More generally, any information that may be of use to partners and ultimately the public is shared within the Employment Sub Group and disseminated amongst the partners many networks.

(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 Employment 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.

Action Completed:

The Employment Sub Group has recently been strengthened by the inclusion of representatives of the Plymouth Learning Trust and the Plymouth Association of Primary Heads.

The Employment Sub Group has recently held an Employability Workshop which brought 34 people from schools, businesses, training providers and public sector agencies together to raise awareness of activities undertaken by each party and develop ideas on how employers and education providers can ensure that young people are 'job ready' by the time they leave education or training. This workshop established a good foundation to forge better links between the private and education sector. Partners were encouraged to be the driver for their own activities; however the Council will help ensure that other organisations are informed in an effort to increase the level of communication. There are a number of potential suggestions including models relating to International Employability, an idea around an Employability Partnership and the use of social media by the development of a 'linked in' group made up of those who attended the workshop to ensure the passage of information regarding new schemes and initiatives. The Employment Sub Group will continue this important work and develop an agreed action plan.

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.

Action Completed:

The HR department has significantly expanded its support to departments across the City Council. Streetscene has recently offered a training qualification and two apprentices have recently been appointed by Parks and are due to start work in late November. Several other departments are now taking on new apprentices, mainly for business administration. The current total number of apprentices stands at 53, with a further 9 planned.

(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.

Action Completed:

The Apprenticeship Co-ordinator post is now a permanent post and continues to contribute towards the apprenticeship scheme and the Work Placement scheme that the Council has running with JobCentrePlus.

(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.

Action Completed:

It should be clarified that apprenticeships are not supernumerary and have never been outside of establishment. Managers are being encouraged to build apprentice positions into their structures rather than turning existing posts into apprenticeships. Further to this, managers are being encouraged to support apprentices to find permanent opportunities where possible upon completion of their apprenticeships.

4. Initiatives

(a) The panel welcomed opportunities for proactive initiatives in support of the creation of employment and/or training opportunities for young people in Plymouth. The Employment 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.

Action Completed:

The ‘1000 Club Campaign’ has been launched on 28 September 2012. The aim of the initiative is to recruit 1000 organisations to support young people into employment whether through work placement, work experience, graduate internship, apprenticeship or employment. It brings all the available job or work experience schemes and opportunities together in one place for employers who have registered to access.

The main focus for the promotion is the web site www.1000club.co.uk. This is a supportive initiative to the Plan for Jobs and has been developed in direct response to employer feedback that our people are not “job ready” regardless of whether employed from school, FE or HE and to provide employers with a single point of contact which they can trust to give them the right advice about what it is exactly that they want without any professional bias involved. This scheme has so far proven so successful other parts of the region have been in discussions about rolling out copycat schemes, or even across the LEP area. For example, 41 firms/partners have become 1000 Club members, who have to-date offered 10 jobs, 26 apprenticeships, 10 work experience and 28 student work experience placements.

Considering the meagre resources expended on this enterprise, which involved a lot of free effort from some of the partners, this would appear to put Plymouth ahead of the curve in terms of finding innovative ways of dealing with youth employment.

Note: It should be noted that with hindsight it was felt that there may have been a gap in evidence around the issue of young people with special educational needs (including disabilities) and that the relevant officers should be asked to explore this and be asked to report back to the Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel, along with updates on the recommendations included in this report.

Action Completed:

This action is not yet completed and is under discussion with colleagues in the People Directorate.

It has been suggested that this report and its recommendations should also be shared with Plymouth's Children and Young People's Trust to allow further opportunities for engagement with employers and young people.

Author: Mark Looker

Job Title: Worklessness Co-ordinator

Department: Economic Development

Date: 08/11/12