



**London Borough of Merton**

**Report and recommendations arising from the scrutiny  
task group review of routes into employment for  
vulnerable cohorts in Merton**

**Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**February 2017**

## **Task group membership**

Councillor Katy Neep (Chair until May 2016)  
Councillor Dennis Pearce (Chair from May 2016)  
Councillor Agatha Akyigyina  
Councillor Charlie Chirico  
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## **Acknowledgements**

The task group would particularly like to thank the council officers and directors who shared their experiences and thoughts with us.

All contributors are listed in Appendix 1.

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## **Forward by Councillor Dennis Pearce, Chair of the Routes into Employment Task Group**



I've been a Merton Councillor for St Helier Ward for many years. During my time I have worked closely with officers and know first hand the skill and dedication they bring to their roles. I was also lucky to work alongside Councillor Maxi Martin who was a fellow St Helier Ward Councillor and the previous Cabinet Member for Children's Services. We sadly lost Maxi this year, but the insight she provided me with has reinforced that every child is different and needs support and care to achieve, that they don't always make the right choices first time and need more support when faced with failure. It is therefore important that we take this opportunity to reflect on what we are doing right for Merton's most vulnerable children and look at what we can do better to help them into employment.

When thinking about those in our care who need our support most, it is easy to think big. However, throughout our work, the task group has been mindful of two key issues: the council is operating in a period of unprecedented budget reductions and given our focus on vulnerable groups, there is a need for us to act quickly and effectively. The work of the task group has therefore been focused on how to add value to and develop the impact of existing services. We have been mindful to make all our recommendations realistic and achievable without significant cost implications.

The task group has received support from officers who have kindly shared their knowledge of children in and coming out of care and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. They have also helped us examine our current provision and have highlighted opportunities for improvement. I would like to thank them all for their time and help. Lastly, I would like to make special mention of Councillor James Holmes, whose concern for the most vulnerable children in Merton has made him a very active member of the task group and who has offered me great support in my role.

## **Executive Summary**

Evidence clearly demonstrates that if you are a vulnerable young person in Merton you are more likely than your peers to not be in education, employment or training or what is described as 'NEET'. As a result, the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Commission decided during the 2015/2016 municipal year to dedicate its task group activity to look at the support provided for vulnerable cohorts to progress into employment. It was agreed that this should specifically mean children and young people in care/care leavers and/or those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Throughout our work, we have been very mindful of operational realities namely unprecedented budget reductions but also given our focus on vulnerable groups, the need to act quickly and effectively.

We have been grateful for the advice of the Economic Wellbeing Group, which is the key forum operating within Merton coordinating interventions to reduce unemployment and increase economic wellbeing. As a result, we have accepted that there are sufficient local employment programmes and instead have focused on how we can add value to this to make it more effective. We have looked at a variety of successful initiatives to inform our recommendations on what might be done to add value to this existing provision. Our recommendations are summarised below.

Our thanks to all those that have supported us in conducting our work. We know that officers are increasingly stretched and therefore the good will, support and time that they have given to us is greatly appreciated. It is our greatest wish that our recommendations are successful in helping vulnerable young people in Merton achieve employment, economic wellbeing and ultimately a better start in life.

## List of the task group's recommendations

	Responsible decision making body
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b> We recommend exploration of how to audit, keep updated and make accessible (to residents and all those working with vulnerable cohorts) information on current provision to support progression into employment.</p>	HR/ <i>futureMerton</i> /CSF team
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b> We recommend that in order to better support target groups<sup>1</sup>, work taster/work experiences be provided. This should include extending the work of the Merton Employment Team in offering work taster/work experiences through the Council's contractors and other services providers (with exploration of how to build this as a requirement into standard contract terms and conditions). How these work taster/work experience opportunities are best delivered should be explored including consideration of the Traineeship framework, the <i>Work Experience Quality Standard</i>, the emerging Apprenticeship Strategy and the provision of a mentor to support each participant.</p>	HR/procurement/ <i>futureMerton</i>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b> To reflect that the aim of improving routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts requires the involvement of teams across the Council (including HR, Children, Schools and Families and <i>futureMerton</i>), we recommend that the Economic Wellbeing Group continue and be supported to be the main focus for reducing unemployment and increasing economic wellbeing in Merton. Attendance at the Economic Wellbeing Group for all appropriate departments, divisions and teams should be reinforced by making this a key performance indicator.</p>	HR/CSF/ <i>futureMerton</i> teams
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b> We recommend how to engage target groups and demonstrate the Council's commitment to their employment be explored. This might be included in the <i>LAC/Care Leaver Pledge</i>.</p>	CSF team
<p><b>Recommendation 5</b></p>	HR/Economic Wellbeing

<sup>1</sup> The Panel agreed that target groups should specifically mean children and young people in care/care leavers and/or those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

<p>We recommend that Merton Council actively supports the target groups through traineeships and apprenticeship opportunities that are advertised by the Council. It is proposed that a percentage of appropriate opportunities for our target groups is embedded in the Council's Apprenticeship Strategy and reflected in Merton's contribution to the Greater London Assembly Public Sector Apprenticeship target.</p>	<p>Group</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6</b> As recommended in previous task groups<sup>2</sup>, the Council should build a requirement for its contractors and other service providers to offer apprenticeships for Merton residents in its standard contract terms and conditions. How to promote apprenticeships to the target groups should be explored including use of <i>London Ambitions</i>.</p>	<p>Procurement/futureMerton</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7</b> We recommend that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel continues to receive data annually on the number of apprenticeships achieved through the Council. This is to demonstrate impact but also to inform practice in the future provision of apprenticeships. Reporting should include the number of apprenticeships achieved, completed and the destinations of those achieving apprenticeships directly through the Council (and in the future its contractors/service providers). Subset data on those from our target groups undertaking apprenticeships should also be provided.</p>	<p>HR</p>

## Report of the Routes into Employment Task Group

### Purpose

1. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel has recognised the need to bring scrutiny focus to the outcomes of the most vulnerable children and young people in Merton. The Panel agreed to achieve this during the 2015/2016 municipal year by dedicating its task group activity to this purpose.
2. Initially, the Panel took a broad approach considering:
  - a. The housing and health offer for care leavers and looked after children to prevent homelessness and unemployment; and
  - b. Educational attainment for disabled children and young people.

However, the Panel, as a result of its initial research, determined that the task group should focus more specifically on the support provided for vulnerable cohorts to progress

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<sup>2</sup> Adult Skills and Employability 2013, Recommendation 3 ([here](#)) and Post 16 Career Pathways 2012 ([here](#))

into employment. By vulnerable cohorts the Panel agreed that this should specifically mean children and young people in care/care leavers and/or those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (the target groups).

3. The task group operated under the following terms of reference:
  - a. To understand how the Council is currently supporting these vulnerable cohorts to gain access to employment;
  - b. To evaluate the effectiveness of this offer in supporting vulnerable cohorts to gain access to employment;
  - c. To consider how any weaknesses in provision might realistically be addressed; and
  - d. To research the approaches taken by other councils to provide vulnerable cohorts with routes into employment and consider how these approaches might inform Merton's practice.
4. Throughout its operation, the task group has been mindful of two key issues:
  - a. The council is operating in a period of unprecedented budget reductions. As a result there is a need to be realistic about the costs of any task group recommendations; and
  - b. Given the focus on vulnerable groups, there is a need to be able to implement recommendations quickly and effectively.

### **What the task group did**

5. The task group has had four formal meetings plus a number of discussions with service managers, heads of service and directors. Having established that services to support vulnerable cohorts into employment are delivered by all departments in the council, the task group undertook to map current provision to inform its work.
6. Appendix 1 lists the written evidence received by the task.
7. We established that the Merton Economic Wellbeing Group is a key forum with which to consult. This is part of the Merton Partnership and brings together a range of local organisations to coordinate interventions to reduce unemployment and increase economic wellbeing. We consulted with the group through our attendance at its meetings in November and December 2016. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the group for its support and for allowing us to consult it and receive its endorsement of our key recommendations.
8. This report sets out the task group's findings, conclusions and recommendations. The task group's recommendations run throughout the report and are set out in full in the executive summary at the front of this document.

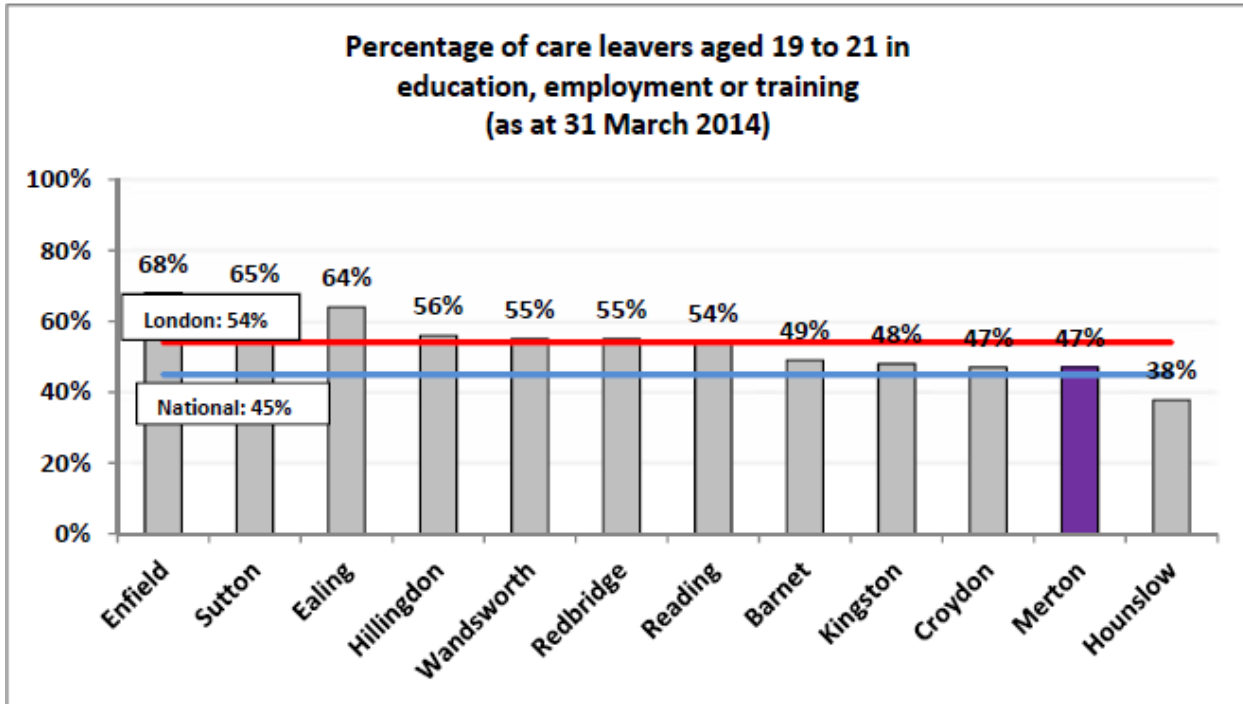
### **Data analysis: evidence of need**

9. The Children, Schools and Families Department presented the latest annual schools standards report in February 2016 ([here](#)). This highlighted:



- a. There has been a 27% rise in the number of young people with SEND in the 16 – 18 cohort and a rise in the number of them who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)<sup>3</sup>; and
- b. Those most at risk of being NEET have had support with their SEND at school, are known to social care and/or are also known to youth offending teams. The largest group (77%) received support with their SEND in school but did not have a statement of special education need<sup>4</sup>.

10. The Care Leaver Strategy 2015 – 2018 identifies that 38%<sup>5</sup> of the 19 – 21 years cohort are not in employment, education or training and provides comparative data for our statistical neighbours:



Source: DfE SFR – Children looked after in England, including adoption (Dec 2014)

11. The July 2015 report on Looked After Children, identified the number of care leavers who are not engaged in education, employment or training as an area of focus following a year-on-year decline in performance. In total, 82 out of 140 young people in the care leaver cohort (59%) were engaged in employment, education or training, with a remaining 41% or 58 young people in the looked-after children/care leaver cohort therefore defined as NEET<sup>6</sup>.

### Fit with existing provision

12. With the focus on routes into employment, we wanted to understand how the Council’s provision of apprenticeships is helping these vulnerable cohorts gain employment. We

<sup>3</sup> Celebrating Success: Achievement in Merton Schools 2014 – 2015 (p 45).- [here](#)

<sup>4</sup> Celebrating Success: Achievement in Merton Schools 2014 – 2015 (p 46) - [here](#)

<sup>5</sup> Care Leaver Strategy 2015 – 2018 London Borough of Merton (p18) - [here](#)

<sup>6</sup> LAC & Care Leaver Cohort Review July 2015, London Borough of Merton (p19) - [here](#)

heard from officers in the Children, Schools and Families Department and HR that apprenticeships do not provide a good solution for our target groups for a number of reasons:

- a. It was identified that the minimum academic level required to access an apprenticeship programme is often prohibitive for those in these groups;
- b. With complex needs, these cohorts often require additional help and support to sustain their involvement on any programme (drop out rates are higher for the target groups than their peers); and
- c. The Council needs to do more to provide entry level positions which would lend themselves well to apprenticeships and progression for these cohorts (for example, with teams in waste management, green spaces and customer contact).

13. We were interested to hear that difficulties faced in accessing apprenticeships have been reviewed by a Department for Business and Innovation and Skills (BIS) through its *Apprenticeships: improving access for people with learning disabilities task force*<sup>7</sup>. This was established because 'although rates for disabled apprentices have improved recently and more disabled people are employed than ever before, there is still work to be done in both areas. Employment rates for people with learning disabilities hover around 6.8% and the lifelong costs of economic inactivity are considerable'. The task force has recommended 'BIS investigates potential changes to the method of assessments for English and Maths for targeted groups as some people with learning difficulties may be able to demonstrate the minimum requirements in the workplace, but be unable to complete a formal assessment'.

14. We are mindful of the Council's responsibilities especially when it comes to those in care/care leavers, for whom the Council is also their Corporate Parent. Officers were at pains to highlight the need to act swiftly to provide a solution for those that are currently in the NEET cohort as would any other parent.

15. *Project Search* ([here](#)) was recommended by officers as a scheme operating locally which has successfully demonstrated its ability to support vulnerable cohorts into employment. This is an initiative developed in the USA and provides a school-to-work transition programme that takes place entirely within the work place. St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Cricket Green School and Action on Disability to give young adults aged 18 – 24 years with learning difficulties the chance to gain valuable work experience.

16. There are currently six trainees based at the hospital for one academic year, where they gain 30 weeks of placement experience in different hospital departments, such as medical records, medical staffing, logistics, catering, the sterile services department and the post room. The trainees are matched to their placements in terms of skills, abilities and interests, and this differs for each student. The trainees are supported by their job coach and their tutor to learn the skills required in each placement, until they can perform the tasks independently. They receive additional support from their mentors who work alongside them in each department.

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<sup>7</sup> Apprenticeships: improving access for people with learning disabilities, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (July 2016) [here](#)

17. The trainees also receive classroom based learning, supported by their tutor. They learn about social skills, employability skills and health and safety in the hospital. The trainees receive training from Mitie, a sub-contracted company within St George's Hospital that provides soft and hard facilities management services including catering, domestic cleaning, vending and a help desk. All trainees who complete a two day Health and Safety in the Workplace course with Mitie pass and received a Level 1 qualification.
18. We are impressed by the *Project Search* model. Councillor Neep met with Celia Dawson, Headteacher at Cricket Green School, and established that 75% of the participants in *Project Search* have gained employment which is significantly larger than the national average for those in this cohort (around 6.8%).
19. The costs of *Project Search* became a focus for the task group. These were reported by officers to be prohibitive especially at the current time with a background of budget cuts and efficiency savings required across the Council.
20. *Ready for Work* ([here](#)), delivered by Business in the Community, is another programme that the task group considered. This has been successful in providing two week placements for disadvantaged young people (ie: those who have experienced homelessness). An individual mentor then provides help with on-going job search activities. The success of the programme is demonstrated by the Bristol based scheme where within three months of completing their work placements, 60% of participants have gained paid work.

## **Adding value to existing provision**

### Improving access to existing provision

21. Whilst it is tempting to recommend additional/new provision aimed at the target groups, we listened carefully to the advice of the Economic Wellbeing Group that this is not required. The group feels that there is plenty of existing provision which is appropriate for the target groups but which isn't sufficiently utilised including apprenticeships. As a result, it has become our objective to ensure the Council can add value to this provision.
22. The Economic Wellbeing Group has also strongly advised us that access to existing provision needs to be achieved through a client centre approach, with each individual being supported to find and enrol on the training that best supports their needs. Despite cuts in provision, we are aware that there are a number of providers in Merton that can give this support and have client centred expertise. An example is those providers that are being funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) up until summer 2018. It is therefore important that all those inside the Council that interact with these vulnerable cohorts are aware that they should be signposting to these experts as is deemed appropriate based on individual need.
23. **We recommend exploration of how to audit, keep updated and make accessible (to residents and all those working with vulnerable cohorts) information on current provision to support progression into employment. (Recommendation 1)**

## Mentor support

24. The Economic Wellbeing Group agreed that as provided by both *Project Search* and *Ready for Work*, those in the target groups receiving employment training should benefit from a mentor. It was thought such a mentoring scheme would lend itself to an employee volunteering programme. To offer something back to the employee, these mentor opportunities could be offered to new and developing managers as the chance to enhance skills and experience. Linking this to graduate training schemes and higher level management and leadership apprenticeship frameworks might also be explored.
25. We are also interested in schemes such as that run by the City of London which give rewards to volunteers to thank them for their contribution: time credits can be earned by anyone who contributes their time to the City of London community and spent on various activities including access to the Council's fitness facilities and hiring CDs and DVDs at any community library.



**Time credits** Share [Twitter] [Facebook] [Email]

CITY OF LONDON

1 TIME CREDIT

“I dedicated an hour of my time to help my community”

CITY OF LONDON

The City of London Time Credits are a way of thanking those who give their time to their local community.

They can be earned by anyone who contributes their time to the City of London community and spent on various activities, including swimming at [Golden Lane Sport & Fitness](#), and also to hire CDs and DVDs at any of the [City of London community libraries](#).

Time Credits can then be spent in places such as Lord's Cricket Ground, St Paul's and the Tower of London.

For full details on how time credits work, where you can earn and spend them, see the [London Time Credits Menu](#)

26. We think it likely that any mentoring scheme will require initial formal training provided with on-going opportunities offered for mentors to continue to network, share experiences and support each other. We are aware that there are other such schemes running locally which might prove informative such as *Inspire* ([here](#)) and organisations like CIPD ([here](#)) provide training on how to establish mentoring programmes.
27. The voluntary sector representatives on the Economic Wellbeing group have indicated that they have expertise that can support the development of a mentoring scheme. There

is also potential to seek external funding with voluntary sector partners for example through the forthcoming round of funding from the Mayor of London's mentoring fund.

### Work tasters/work experience

28. The Economic Wellbeing Group agreed it would be advantageous for the Council to make a greater number and wider range of work tasters/work experiences available to provide those in the target groups with opportunities to develop work readiness. These would act as a bridge into longer term training opportunities (such as L1-3 Apprenticeships). The aim of this approach would be to prevent dropout which has been identified as an issue.

29. We have heard from local training providers that these work tasters/work experience opportunities might sit within the framework of formal Traineeships ([here](#)). These are targeted at those who are not currently in a job and have little work experience, are focused on work or the prospect of it; are aged between 16-19 and qualified below Level 3 or 19-24 and have not yet achieved a full Level 2, and providers and employers believe they have a reasonable chance of being ready for employment or in order to move onto an Apprenticeship within six months of engaging in a Traineeship. However, we have also noted that these are not intended for the most disengaged young people, who require very intensive support.

30. We became aware of the *Work Experience Quality Standard* ([here](#)). This is operated by Fair Train and is a national accreditation which provides external quality assurance for high quality work experience and employability programmes. This appears a good route by which to ensure work taster/work experience opportunities provide the best possible experience for participants. We particularly like that this requires regular opportunities for review of progress during the work taster, including praise for achievement and feedback on areas for improvement.

31. We have heard there is much benefit in being able to give our target groups the breadth of experience that other young people typically gain through their family and friends. This needs to involve supporting access to a range of work tasters/work experiences across a number of sectors.

32. We also feel It is important to consider what happens after a young person has completed their work taster/work experience. This should include a range of opportunities for progression including Apprenticeships where appropriate.

### Case studies

33. We have been impressed by the work of Nottingham City Council and its innovative Care Leavers scheme:

#### **Nottingham City Council Care Leavers scheme – case study**

In recognition of the fact not all young people leaving care feel prepared to make the step into a full time Apprenticeship, training or employment, the Leaving Care Service has launched a new in-house employability programme that supports Nottingham's

most disadvantaged and vulnerable care leavers to make positive steps towards training and employment. The DWP now recognises this programme as a valid contribution to the claimant commitment for Job Seekers.

The programme provides bespoke opportunities that aim to build a young person's confidence and give them the support that they need to develop the good habits and skills that are essential to sustaining mainstream training or employment. Young people are involved in all aspects of planning their programmes, ensuring that they are created around their individual interests, level of commitment and readiness.

Each bespoke programme gives young people the opportunity to gain meaningful work experience under the guidance of a mentor, provided by an ever increasing network of community partners and internal Nottingham City Council services. In addition, the *Leaving Care Service* has become an approved centre for the delivery of ASDAN courses and all young people have the opportunity to achieve employability qualifications (entry to level 2) by participating. Young people undertaking work experience with not for profit organisations are further acknowledged and rewarded via links to national volunteering schemes (e.g. WWV).

The programme strives for a holistic approach to supporting young people to progress. Those facing multiple barriers to entering or sustaining training and work are provided with a tailored resilience coaching and counselling service through a partnership with Lasting Differences (CIC). Further barriers to engagement that young people may experience such as the cost of travel and work clothing are also removed. Preparation and progression are at the heart of the programme and detailed transition planning takes place with each young person to ensure they are supported to continue their positive momentum towards regular training or employment.

34. We have also heard that the Community and Housing Department, through its Merton Employment Team, is already providing work experience/work readiness schemes for people in Merton with learning disabilities, physical disabilities and sensory impairment including working with local employers. This includes work placements with the Council itself and its contractors. The Employment Team has highlighted to the task group how it has worked with the Council's cleaning contractors to provide work placements which have proved a popular choice for the individuals it supports.
35. The aim of the team is to support suitable applicants into paid employment and provide on-going support in the workplace as required to achieve independence. It works with clients by getting to know them, learning about their experience and skills, making sure they have a current CV and providing a benefits check. It offers training and advice in applying for jobs and interview skills. It provides a regular job club to help with job searches and how to fill out job applications. It will accompany participants to meet employers and job interviews, providing support throughout the recruitment process and then help with learning the route from home to a new job or work training. It will also regularly visit participants in their new roles.
36. In our view, there has not been enough recognition of the work of the Merton Employment Team and its expertise in making placements available and successful for vulnerable

cohorts even though there is an overlap in provision given it works with young people from the age of 18 years. Whilst the team has emphasised it does not have resources to expand its scheme, it is willing to share its expertise.

37. We also feel that the work of the Merton Employment Team is important because it is unlikely that the Council can by itself provide sufficient quantity or range of work taster /work experience opportunities. There is potential to learn from the team and its engagement of local employers. The task group thought larger employers would be more suitable as they have sufficient size and resources to make their involvement realistic.
38. **We recommend that in order to better support target groups, work taster/work experiences be provided. This should include extending the work of the Merton Employment Team in offering work taster/work experiences through the Council's contractors and other services providers (with exploration of how to build this as a requirement into standard contract terms and conditions). How these work taster/work experience opportunities are best delivered should be explored including consideration of the Traineeship framework, the *Work Experience Quality Standard*, the emerging Apprenticeship Strategy and the provision of a mentor to support each participant. (Recommendation 2)**
39. **Additionally, to reflect that the aim of improving routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts requires the involvement of teams across the Council (including HR, Children, Schools and Families and *futureMerton*), we recommend that the Economic Wellbeing Group continue and be supported to be the main focus for reducing unemployment and increasing economic wellbeing in Merton. Attendance at the Economic Wellbeing Group for all appropriate departments, divisions and teams should be reinforced by making this a key performance indicator. (Recommendation 3)**

### **Engagement and demonstrable commitment**

40. We acknowledge the difficulties of engaging young people in the target groups. This is something to which the task group has given consideration and whilst it acknowledges that there is no quick fix, members do feel that those that have successfully participated in a work taster/experience may provide the best route through which to promote this opportunity to potential future participants. There is also potential for those that have been mentored to progress to become mentors themselves. This provides another opportunity for skills development.
41. Thought should be given to how this promotion should happen. This might include the development of printed promotional materials and asking young people to talk about their experiences to their peers for example, through opportunities such as the *Your Shout Group*. However, we feel that social media is probably the most important channel by which young people should be encourage to talk about their experiences to their peers. Social media channels such as *YouTube* are possibly the most appropriate.
42. As part of its work the task group has reviewed the Merton Council *Looked After Children and Care Leavers Pledge*, the pledge the Council makes to children in care and care

leavers. We note the pledge lacks specific reference to employability skills ([here](#)). Members of the task group consider that it is important for the Council to signal to those in care and care leavers, that it will provide practical support into employment. As a minimum, members of the task group feel it is important that vulnerable cohorts are supported to develop a skills profile. For example, (under 'Achieve economic well-being /Support for your future') include a promise to 'Help you develop a skills profile that can be used to gain access to a work experience opportunity'.

43. By a skills profile we envisage a proforma should be developed based on existing best practice including information on qualifications, skills, competencies, experiences, likes and ambitions (this reflects the framework used by *Project Search* for placement matching). We think that this might be provided through an online form with accompanying support.

**44. We recommend how to engage target groups and demonstrate the Council's commitment to their employment be explored. This might be included in the LAC/Care Leaver Pledge. (Recommendation 4)**

### **Apprenticeships and careers guidance**

45. Whilst it was not our primary objective to consider the Council's existing provision of Apprenticeships, this naturally arose during our work. It is apparent that the Council has provided Apprenticeships over the last three years but the number is limited by the Council's own capacity.

46. We are interested that other councils (such as Southwark) are working effectively through their contractors:

#### **Southwark Council: Apprenticeship champion - case study**

Southwark champions Apprenticeships during procurement to build targets into key council contracts. Last year contractors took on 92 new Apprentices across administration, IT, customer support and technical roles. The borough's employment programmes created 52 more with local employers and partners. And through S106 commitments 107 Apprentices started in construction. The Southwark Apprenticeship Standard continues to set the standard for quality local Apprenticeships with employers like PWC, the GLA, Essentia and smaller employers too.

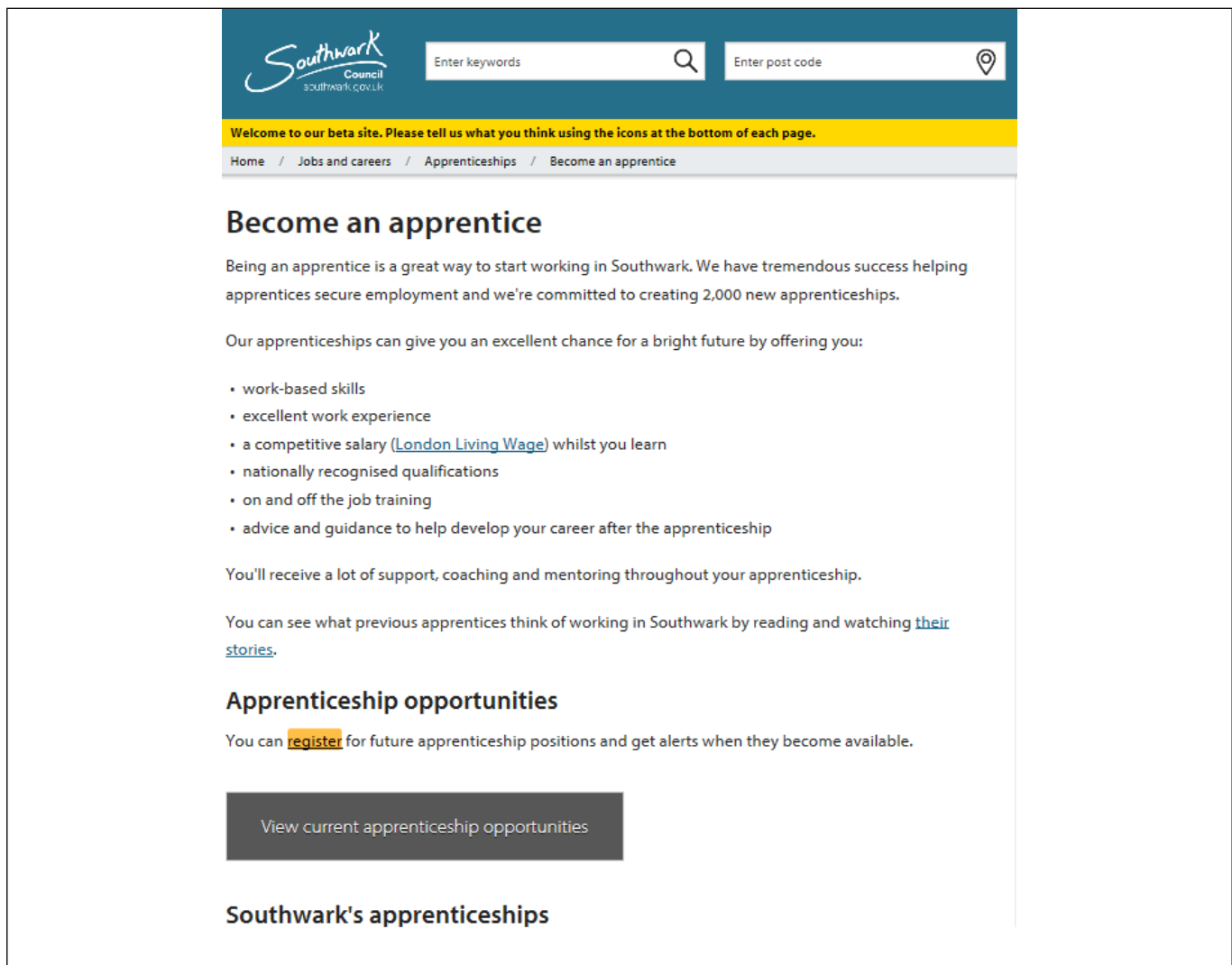
In November 2015, the borough celebrated 23 signatories to the Apprenticeship Standard ([here](#)); these partners created over 100 Apprenticeships last year, offering the best in secure employment, a fair wage, Apprentice support and quality training to their Apprentices. Southwark's borough-wide approach focuses on sustained impact. Building on 412 Apprenticeships across some 60 employers, this year the borough is ramping up Apprenticeship promotion with a two year campaign in partnership with schools and colleges.

The London Borough of Southwark recently won a London Borough Apprenticeship Award for the best work with supply chains and/or small business to create new



Apprenticeships. The judges selected Southwark due to the innovative work it has undertaken to increase both the quantity and the quality of Apprenticeships. The judges felt Southwark is forward looking and always trying to generate new, high quality, opportunities for local residents.

47. As for work tasters/work experiences, we have also heard that there is high value for our target cohort in Apprenticeship opportunities that provide a range of experiences across a number of sectors (ie: public, private, charitable etc) to give our target groups and others a breadth of opportunities to inform their life choices.
48. We were told by officers that there is evidence Merton residents are taking up Apprenticeships outside of the borough, with some travelling a considerable distance all of which will add to the costs and difficulties of undertaking an Apprenticeship. Again, the task group found other councils (for example, Southwark) that are taking a strong role in promoting local Apprenticeships.



The screenshot shows the 'Become an apprentice' page on the Southwark Council website. The header includes the Southwark Council logo, a search bar with the text 'Enter keywords', and a location search bar with the text 'Enter post code'. Below the header is a yellow banner with the text: 'Welcome to our beta site. Please tell us what you think using the icons at the bottom of each page.' The breadcrumb trail reads: 'Home / Jobs and careers / Apprenticeships / Become an apprentice'. The main heading is 'Become an apprentice'. The text below reads: 'Being an apprentice is a great way to start working in Southwark. We have tremendous success helping apprentices secure employment and we're committed to creating 2,000 new apprenticeships. Our apprenticeships can give you an excellent chance for a bright future by offering you:' followed by a bulleted list: '• work-based skills', '• excellent work experience', '• a competitive salary ([London Living Wage](#)) whilst you learn', '• nationally recognised qualifications', '• on and off the job training', and '• advice and guidance to help develop your career after the apprenticeship'. Below this, it says 'You'll receive a lot of support, coaching and mentoring throughout your apprenticeship.' and 'You can see what previous apprentices think of working in Southwark by reading and watching [their stories](#).' The section 'Apprenticeship opportunities' follows, with the text 'You can [register](#) for future apprenticeship positions and get alerts when they become available.' At the bottom of this section is a dark grey button with the text 'View current apprenticeship opportunities'. The page ends with the heading 'Southwark's apprenticeships'.

49. We feel there are extensive opportunities for promoting Apprenticeships include regular features in *MyMerton*, in local media, on social media and promotion through libraries, youth centres, clubs etc. Information available through the Council's website could be improved to support those that are interested to register their data so they can be regularly sent information on new opportunities provided by the Council. Case studies could be provided and the Council could actively support *National Apprenticeship Week* ([here](#)) and promotion through schools and colleges at the point in the academic year when young people are considering their career choices. Parents are important too and they could be provided with information about Apprenticeships (and other choices information) through opportunities such as at parent evenings etc.
50. We took the opportunity to again look at *London Ambitions* ([here](#)) which aims to provide a successful careers offer for all young Londoners. This comprises personalised information, advice and guidance, 100 hours of experience of the world of work, a careers policy and curriculum, governors ensuring all students are supported, user friendly labour market intelligence, development of 'careers clusters' and use of the *London Ambitions* portal. We feel this is a strong offer that would benefit Merton's young people.
- 51. We recommend that Merton Council actively supports our target groups through traineeships and apprenticeship opportunities that are advertised by the Council. It is proposed that a percentage of appropriate opportunities for our target groups is embedded in the Council's Apprenticeship Strategy and reflected in Merton's contribution to the Greater London Assembly Public Sector Apprenticeship target. (Recommendation 5)**
- 52. As recommended in previous task groups<sup>8</sup>, the Council should build a requirement for its contractors and other service providers to offer apprenticeships for Merton residents in its standard contract terms and conditions. How to promote apprenticeships to the target groups should be explored including use of *London Ambitions*. (Recommendation 6)**

## Conclusion

53. This has been an interesting and useful task group and we have learned a lot about routes into employment for vulnerable cohorts, some of which has overlapped with consideration of Apprenticeships.
- 54. We recommend that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel continues to receive data annually on the number of Apprenticeships achieved through the Council. This is to demonstrate impact but also to inform practice in the future provision of Apprenticeships. Reporting should include the number of Apprenticeships achieved, completed and the destinations of those achieving Apprenticeships directly through the Council (and in the future its contractors/service providers). Subset data on those from our target groups undertaking Apprenticeships should also be provided. (Recommendation 7)**

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<sup>8</sup> Adult Skills and Employability 2013, Recommendation 3 ([here](#)) and Post 16 Career Pathways 2012 ([here](#))

## **What happens next?**

55. This task group was established by the Council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel and so this report will be presented to its meeting on 8 February 2017 for the Panel's approval.
56. Once approved by the Panel, it will go to Cabinet which will be asked to provide a formal response to the Panel within two months.
57. The Cabinet is asked to respond to each of the task group's recommendations, setting out whether the recommendation is accepted and how and when it will be implemented. If the Cabinet is unable to support the implementation of the recommendation, then it is expected that a clearly stated reason will be provided for each.
58. The lead Cabinet Member (or officer to whom this work is delegated) should ensure that other organisations to whom recommendations have been directed are contacted and their response to those recommendations is included in the report.
59. A further report will be sought by the Panel six months after the Cabinet response has been received, giving an update on progress with implementation of the recommendations.

## **Appendix 1: witnesses at meetings**

- Paul Angeli, Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Youth Inclusion
- Kim Brown, Head of Organisation Development and HR Strategy
- Sarah Daly, Head of Service LAC, Permanency and Placements
- Celia Dawson, Head, Cricket Green School
- Clive Duke, Employment Adviser
- Karla Finikin, Services Manager, SEN Disabilities Integrated Service
- Anthony Hopkins, Head of Library and Heritage Services
- Jill Iliffe, Service Manager Adult Learning
- James McGinlay, Head of Sustainable Communities
- Jane McSherry, Assistant Director of Education
- Keith Shipman, Education Inclusion Manager
- Mellisa Stewart, Commissioning Manager Alternative Provision
- Sara Williams, Programme Manager Economy

Additionally, the task group met with the members of the Economic Wellbeing Group.