

## **Committee: Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Group**

**Date: 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018**

Wards: ALL

### **Subject: Routes to employment for vulnerable cohorts**

Lead officer: Director for Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee

Lead member: Councillor Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration.

Contact officer: Sara Williams, futureMerton, Programme Manager for Business and Economy

---

#### **Recommendations:**

- A. The Panel discuss and comment on the latest report and accompanying action plan (Appendix 1) detailing progress on the implementation of the recommendations of the Routes to Employment for Vulnerable Cohorts Task Group.

#### **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the Executive Response and a response Action Plan to the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Panel to demonstrate how the recommendations of the routes to employment for vulnerable cohorts Task Group have been implemented.

#### **2 DETAILS**

- 2.1. At their meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2015, the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel decided to dedicate a task group activity to look at the support provided for vulnerable cohorts. Initially, the Panel took a broad approach considering:
- The housing and health offer for care leavers and looked after children to prevent homelessness and unemployment; and
  - Educational attainment for disabled children and young people.
- 2.2. 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 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).
- 2.3. Report and recommendations resulting from the task group review was presented on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2017. Officers have since been tasked with delivering the agreed recommendations. This paper presents a response to the recommendations with an action plan for delivery found under Appendix 1.

- 2.4 Merton has 190 looked after children and care leavers of which 60 are not in employment education or training (NEET) There are 420 SEND young people of which 34 are seeking employment. There are also 210 looked after young people and care leavers above statutory school age and 64 are NEET. Therefore the net target group equates to 158 young people requiring support with employment.

### **3 RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 3.1. **Recommendation 1:** 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.
- 3.2. **Response to Recommendation 1 - Agreed and met.**
- 3.3. **Recommendation 2:** 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 <sup>2</sup>Merton Employment Team in offering work taster/work experiences through the Council's contractors and other service 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.
- 3.4. **Response to Recommendation 2 – In progress**
- 3.5 The Workforce Strategy Board is proposing an agreed work experience programme from 2018. The paper will be presented to Workforce Strategy Board on 22<sup>nd</sup> January. Further details will be reported back to Scrutiny following a decision. This will include an agreed number of placements across the organisation for a period of time. A percentage of the placements will be allocated to the vulnerable groups included in this review. The receiving manager will have support and advice in preparation for the placement. Each participant will receive a certificate or record of achievement on completion of their placement.
- 3.6 In parallel, Commercial Services, working in conjunction with Procurement Board and Departmental Operational Procurement Groups, will seek to encourage contractors to replicate opportunities for placements within the Councils supply chains/contractors agreements. This will be driven through the application of the Social Value Act in Merton's procurement processes.

---

<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)

<sup>2</sup> We believe this is reference to the human resources team.

- 3.7 **Recommendation 3:** 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 (KPI).
- 3.8 **Response to Recommendation 3 – Agreed and met**
- 3.9 It is proposed that this should not be a key performance indicator (KPI) but a commitment from all officers who support vulnerable cohorts to work in partnership through the Economic Wellbeing Group (EWG). This means a commitment to attend the meetings and participate in programmes that support the target groups and identify real time vacancies. The additional representation on the group has strengthened partnership working and provides information on the available support around routes to employment for our vulnerable cohorts to officers working with these young people.
- 3.10 **Recommendation 4:** We recommend how to engage target groups and demonstrate the Council's commitment to their employment be explored. This might be included in the Looked After Children/Care Leavers Pledge.
- 3.11 **Response to Recommendation 4 – In progress**
- 3.12 Children and Young People will be engaged in the refresh of the Looked After Children and Care Leavers' Strategy. This piece of consultation will be undertaken by Corum. We will consult on how we can best support young people into further education, training and employment. Our support will be written into our local offer for care leavers.
- 3.13 **Recommendation 5:** 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 public sector apprenticeship targets.
- 3.14 **Response to Recommendation 5 – In progress**
- 3.15 The Council does have a limited budget for the recruitment of apprenticeships. However, DMTs are encouraged to review positions before advertising to see if they are appropriate for job carving i.e. creating a role that is more suitable for an apprentice. The provision of apprenticeships to vulnerable young people is included in the Council's Workforce Strategy and vulnerable young people are given priority to apprenticeships roles that become available in the Council.

- 3.16 **Recommendation 6:** As recommended in previous task groups<sup>3</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*.
- 3.17 **Response to Rec 6 – Under consideration**
- 3.18 This will be explored further through the Social Value Act. Procurement can encourage contractors but not mandate. Procurement departments have an obligation to accept the “most economically advantaged tenders” which includes consideration of price, quality and social value when awarding contracts. Alongside, the Social Value Act 2013 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Before starting a procurement process, commissioners are required to think about whether the services they are going to buy, or the way they are going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area or stakeholders.
- 3.19 **London Ambitions** is an online portal that enables students, schools/colleges and employers to connect and share career opportunities. The aim is to bring education and industry closer together, helping employers and teachers join forces in providing young people with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in their future. It is proposed that the portal is promoted to our schools and colleges and that as an employer we commit to registering on the portal and promoting careers at the Council. The Council will explore if this is possible within existing resources and advise. The Council has the mechanism to promote in Schools.
- 3.20 **Recommendation 7:** We recommend that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel continue 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 it’s contractors/service providers) Subset data on those from our target groups undertaking apprenticeships should also be provided.
- 3.21 **Response to Recommendation 7 – Agreed will be reported annually from March 2018.**
- 3.22 Data is already collected on the number of apprenticeships achieved through the Council, within the Human Resources Team. More recently, all London Council’s have an obligation from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017, to report the council’s annual apprenticeship numbers to the GLA (Public Sector Targets). The recommendation asks for a breakdown providing sub-set data which is automatically collected at recruitment by Human Resources.

---

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

- 3.23 The recommendation also requires details on completions and destinations following an apprenticeship. My futures have data on all LAC and care leavers which can be reported.

#### **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 No alternative options offered at this stage. Additional actions under recommendation 2, 5 and 6 could have cost implications on the Council.

#### **5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 5.1 The actions were discussed between officers in human resources, Looked After Children Permanency and Placements, Education Inclusion, Joint Commissioning and Partnerships, Commercial Services, futureMerton and Public Health
- 5.2 The EWG were consulted during the Scrutiny Review and have been kept updated on proposed recommendations. The EWG Indicator Set acts as a list of the activities being delivered by the partners which supports routes to employment for the vulnerable clients concerned.

#### **6 TIMETABLE**

- 6.1 Please see the attached Appendix 1 for proposed dates on reporting outcomes/outputs back to Scrutiny.

#### **7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The proposals have in the main, been made with the expectation that the actions can be implemented using existing resources. However, there are financial implications to implement Recommendations 2, 5 and 6.
- 7.2 The cost to cover salaries (circa £14k per apprentice) and any necessary financial support for the target groups is required to meet Recommendations 2 and 5.
- 7.3 Any changes to the way in which we procure which has a cost implication to the Council (as suggested under Recommendation 6) will need to go to Procurement Board for approval prior to being considered by any other panel / forum.

#### **8 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The council has extensive legal duties with regard to LAC and care leavers – more to be added.

#### **8.2 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

Supporting these vulnerable groups into employment is in line with the Council Human Rights, Equalities and community cohesion requirements. The Council acts as the corporate parent for looked after children and care leavers and as such has a responsibility to provide parental guidance in seeking and obtaining employment.

## **9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Reducing unemployment can lead to the reduction in crime.

## **10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 None.

## **11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

Appendix 1 - Routes to employment for vulnerable cohorts - Action Plan

## **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 Workforce Strategy found [here](#):

12.2 Childrens and Young people corporate parenting report found here:  
<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/documents/s5849/Looked%20After%20Children%20-%20Annual%20Corporate%20Parenting%20Report.pdf#search=looked%20after%20children%20pledge>

12.3 Apprenticeship funding: rules and guidance for employers version2 published May 2017 found [here](#)

12.4 Adult Skills and Employability 2013, Recommendation 3 ([here](#)) and Post 16 Career Pathways 2012 [here](#)