



**BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL (BMBC)**

**This matter is not a Key Decision within the council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan.**

**Report of the Director of Human Resources,  
Performance and Communications.**

**SCRUTINY TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT ON 'WORK READINESS'**

**1. Purpose of the report**

1.1 To report to Cabinet the findings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) from the investigation undertaken on its behalf by the 'Work Readiness' Task & Finish Group (TFG) regarding what is being done to help young people in Barnsley to be 'work ready'.

**2. Recommendations**

**2.1 That Cabinet considers the conclusions and recommendations set out in section 6 as a result of its investigation into what is being done to help young people in Barnsley to be 'work ready'.**

**3. Background**

3.1 This TFG was established as a result of considering the 2013-14 Quarter 4 Corporate Plan Performance Report which highlighted concerns regarding the number of jobs created in the Borough as well as unemployment amongst 18-24 year olds. In consideration of this, Members raised concerns regarding the skills of both adults and young people in relation to being 'work ready'.

3.2 Aside from academic attainment and the ability to carry out tasks in the workplace, employers need workers who are: reliable and will turn up on time; are able to communicate effectively and provide good customer care; and can work as part of, as well as lead teams. Therefore if jobs are being created and we have a number of people unemployed, we need to ensure that the skills-gap is being addressed.

3.3 As outlined in the Corporate Plan, the three priorities for Barnsley are: a thriving and vibrant economy, strong and resilient communities; and citizens achieving their potential. Ensuring people in our communities are 'work ready' contributes to achieving all of these and should be prioritised in services being provided. The investigation therefore sought to better understand what is being done to prepare people for work and enable them to obtain employment, particularly in relation to enabling them to be 'work ready'.

3.4 The members of this TFG included:

Councillor John Wilson (TFG Lead Member), Councillor Phil Birkinshaw, Councillor Phil Davies, Councillor Lesley Duerden, Councillor Wayne Johnson, Councillor Sarah Tattersall and Mr John Winter (Co-optee).

#### **4. What the Task & Finish Group (TFG) looked at**

- 4.1 Initial meetings were held to scope the investigation and identify some of the key lines of enquiry. Through the TFG's meetings as a group, and with a representative from Barnsley Business and Innovation Centre (BBIC), it was soon established that enabling people to be 'work ready' was a very complex issue. This included for example parental and peer influences from a very young age and through adulthood; school education; as well as societal norms.
- 4.2 The TFG were keen that this work made a difference and sought to narrow the focus of the investigation. This resulted in an agreement to establish what services were currently being delivered that would contribute to enabling people to be 'work ready' and identify where there may be potential for better performance.
- 4.3 Tom Smith, Head of Extended Services and Support for the Children, Young People and Families Directorate gave a presentation to the TFG which outlined national policy changes in relation to this agenda and the responsibilities of the local authority which included:
- Young people have a duty to participate in learning and or employment with training until the end of the academic year in which they are 17 (18 as of June 2015)
  - Schools and Post 16 providers have a duty to provide independent and impartial Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) for all their students.
  - Local authorities have a duty to support those who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training); those with a statement of special educational needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP); those who are looked after or in care and those who are involved with the Youth Justice Services.
- 4.4 As part of the response to address some of these issues, Barnsley Council and its partners have developed the I Know I Can (IKIC) brand which aims to:
- Inspire: by building confidence and creating dreams and goals
  - Enable: by helping young people acquire the appropriate qualifications and strengthen life skills
  - Support: by helping young people to access information, advice and guidance to take ownership of their lives and future.

Through this, a programme of opportunities has been developed for young people to engage in activities and access resources to raise their aspirations and support them in achieving their potential.

- 4.5 The TFG therefore decided to focus their investigation on how effective the IKIC offer is in terms of enabling our young people to be 'work ready' and in particular how it has engaged with those who are 'hard to reach' including those who are vulnerable and those with lower academic attainment.

- 4.6 This resulted in members of the TFG:
- Meeting with employees who deliver Targeted Information Advice and Guidance (TIAG) services to support vulnerable young people such as those who are NEET, those with an EHCP, young people in care and those involved with the youth offending team;
  - Visiting a number of schools across the Borough and meeting with pupils with a range of academic abilities, and those who had engaged and not engaged in IKIC activities;
  - Attending and participating in IKIC events such as providing interview experience for young people as well as attending an IKIC Industry Day.

## **5. What the Task & Finish Group found**

- 5.1 The TFG have been pleasantly surprised by the work and services being delivered in relation to enabling our young people to be 'work ready'. They have also been impressed by the knowledge and employability skills evidenced by a number of our young people who they met as part of this investigation. There is evidence of schools engaging with the IKIC programme and utilising the schemes and opportunities available as well as developing their own in-house initiatives which enable pupils to gain and develop employability skills. Running these schemes has provided young people with invaluable opportunities and experiences which will aid them in both obtaining work in the future but also in carrying out their duties.
- 5.2 For those young people identified as 'vulnerable' there is provision of a TIAG service which focuses on ensuring these young people participate in learning. This service aims to avoid young people becoming NEET and is most effective when they are able to provide early intervention and build up trust with individuals. As noted in the report by the Early Intervention Foundation (2015), the 3<sup>rd</sup> biggest cost of late intervention for children and young people is on welfare benefits for 18-24 year olds who are NEET, costing £3.7bn.
- 5.3 Of concern however is accessing those pupils who are 'hard to reach' and don't engage in available activities. These pupils have a range of academic abilities but there can be several reasons why they don't engage in activities, for example they may lack confidence, they don't see the relevance of the opportunities or they feel the need to only prioritise their academic studies.
- 5.4 Staff who were directly involved in the delivery of the different schemes were very enthusiastic and committed to their work which was reflected in the pupils who had engaged in the services. The staff valued the importance of the different schemes and how the knowledge and experiences young people gain from extra curricular activities both in and out of school, work experience placements and CIAG positively impacts on young people. However, this is not necessarily reflected by other staff who work with children and young people such as other teachers in schools. A number of young people mentioned that their experience on their work placement had encouraged them to work harder at school to better their academic attainment as they needed to do better either to undertake a career in the work they had experienced or to avoid it.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 **Recommendation 1: We recommend an all-member information brief (AMIB) is held on the IKIC programme as part of the 2015/16 programme**  
This will help to raise awareness of the opportunities available so that Members are better able to promote opportunities in their wards and in their other duties, e.g. as School Governors. This would also raise awareness of schemes that Members could participate in to assist our young people in gaining employability skills.
- 6.2 **Recommendation 2: We recommend a specific session should be held at the Barnsley Alliance Board, to share knowledge and good practice regarding preparing young people for employment**  
As this board is where secondary schools meet to challenge and improve each others' practices, this provides the opportunity to promote the opportunities available under IKIC as well as other internal initiatives operating within schools. We recommend this information is then disseminated within our schools, particularly with senior leadership teams and with those staff who may not have direct involvement in the delivery of schemes. This is to help ensure that value is placed on this agenda and the 'offer' to improve the employability skills of our young people is more consistent across Barnsley schools. Through this board, all secondary schools could be encouraged to obtain a Quality Award for their careers education. The recent national publication of the Teach First report on 'Careers education in the classroom: The role of teachers in making young people work ready' should be used as a catalyst for this work and the session at the Barnsley Alliance Board.
- 6.3 **Recommendation 3: We recommend regular time is specifically set aside in all secondary school timetables for preparing young people for employment**  
This includes providing pupils with CIAG and developing their employability skills. This should help to ensure 'early intervention' can take place with vulnerable pupils and ensure that input is provided for those who are 'hard to reach'.
- 6.4 **Recommendation 4: We recommend work is done to better engage parents/carers in this agenda**  
This is so that parents/carers also value the importance of preparing young people for employment. Funding from Area Councils could be sought to assist with this, particularly as parents/carers often want to support their child but don't know how to. Career options are constantly changing, for example there are jobs available now which did not exist even 5 years ago, therefore it is important that good quality careers advice is provided. We recommend these sessions need to focus on engaging those who are 'hard to reach'; the results of such sessions should however benefit the whole community.
- 6.5 **Recommendation 5: We recommend the Council and local business increase the number of work placements available for young people**  
In doing this, businesses will need to be clear about what this entails and therefore the process needs to be simplified as much as possible (e.g. regarding health and safety assessments that would need to be carried out). Schools can struggle to provide work experience placements for young people under 16 due to businesses focussing on providing placements for college students.
- 6.6 **Recommendation 6: We recommend that data is gathered and utilised to understand where there are hard to reach group in terms of this agenda which have particular needs and will require extra support**  
For example, NEET figures should be broken down by race, gender, ethnicity, disability etc. to understand hard to reach groups and target interventions accordingly. If these

groups are not prioritised we will not be able to make a fundamental difference for the total population.

**6.7 Recommendation 7: We recommend that the good work that is taking place is celebrated, in particular the achievements of our young people**

In undertaking this investigation, the TFG have been impressed by the work taking place and the achievements of pupils who have taken part in particular schemes. It is important that this is celebrated and that these opportunities are available across all our schools.

The TFG would also like to take this opportunity to thank all those who provided information and assisted with the TFG's investigation.

**7. Implications for local people / service users**

- 7.1 A variety of opportunities are available for our young people in terms of their future careers. It is important that our young people have equal opportunities to access services and activities which will aid them in their development and preparation for their future. It is also important that parents/carers are well-informed about this agenda and available opportunities so that they can support the young people they are responsible for to achieve their potential. Encouraging our young people to achieve and develop 'work ready' skills will benefit all of our communities, by enabling people to contribute positively to society.

**8. Financial implications**

- 8.1 There are no specific financial implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the financial implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding which may be the Council or partnership agencies.

**9. Employee implications**

- 9.1 There are no specific employee implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the employee implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding which may be the Council or partnership agencies.

**10. Communications implications**

- 10.1 The good practice highlighted in the report as well as the achievements of young people in the Borough should be celebrated and shared by officers, Members and within appropriate publications. By holding an AMIB, Members will be better aware of available programmes and the achievement of our young people. Celebration of these achievements should also be included by the service within their annual communications plan.

**11. Consultations**

11.1 Consultations have taken place with Councillors Wilson (TFG Lead Member), P. Birkinshaw, Davies, Duerden, Ennis (OSC Chair), Johnson, Tattersall, Co-opted Member John Winter and Council Officers Julia Bell, Rachel Dickinson and Rachel King.

## **12. Community Strategy and the Council's Performance Management Framework**

12.1 Ensuring people in our communities are 'work ready' contributes to achieving all of the three priorities for Barnsley as outlined in the Council's Corporate Plan which are: a thriving and vibrant economy, strong and resilient communities; and citizens achieving their potential. Prioritising this agenda will help to avoid our young people becoming NEET and thereby avoiding the high costs of them being on welfare benefits.

## **13. Risk management issues**

13.1 This issue directly relates to the following risks, currently logged on the Council's Strategic Risk Register (SRR):

- 'Failure to build the economy of Barnsley' (Risk 3021); and,
- 'Lack of educational attainment' (Risk 3047).

13.2 The recommendations detailed in section 6.1 – 6.7 should be considered by the relevant risk owner in light of the current review of the SRR, which is due to be completed and reported to Cabinet in May 2015.

13.3 It is likely the recommended activities detailed in this report will contribute further to the effective mitigation of these risks, and it would be appropriate for any follow-up report regarding the 'work readiness' of young people in Barnsley to be cognisant of these risks.

## **14. Promoting equality & diversity and social inclusion**

14.1 The TFG looked at the impact of this issue on all of Barnsley's communities. The TFG acknowledges that vulnerable groups in particular need to be fully supported in this agenda as well as those that are hard to reach. As highlighted in the recommendations, data needs to be broken down to identify hard to reach and minority groups so that interventions can be targeted accordingly.

## **15. Reduction of crime & disorder**

15.1 Engaging young people in this agenda will help to reduce crime and disorder by enabling them to have the skills and abilities to engage in education, training and employment.

## **16. Glossary**

16.1 AMIB – All Member Information Brief  
BBIC - Barnsley Business and Innovation Centre  
BMBC – Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council  
CIAG – Careers Information, Advice and Guidance  
EHCP – Education, Health and Care Plan  
IKIC – I know I Can programme

NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training  
OSC – Overview and Scrutiny  
TIAG – Targeted Information, Advice and Guidance  
TFG – Task and Finish Group

**17. Background papers**

- Participation in education, training and employment among 16-24 year olds in Barnsley - Cabinet Report (Cab.27.8.2014/8.2):  
<http://edemocracy.barnsley.gov.uk/0xac16000b%20x00585699>
- I Know I Can (IKIC) Offer 2014/15 Brochure
- Early Intervention Foundation: Spending on Late Intervention Report (2015):  
<http://www.eif.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/SPENDING-ON-LATE-INTERVENTION.pdf>
- Teach First report on 'Careers education in the classroom: The role of teachers in making young people work ready' (2015):  
<http://www.teachfirst.org.uk/sites/default/files/Careers-in-the-classroom-report.pdf>

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Financial Implications /

Consultation .....

*(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer where no financial implications)*