

## 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 - ADULTS'

#### 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 the barriers are to being 'work-ready' and gain employment, and what is being done to help adults in Barnsley overcome these.

#### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet considers the conclusions and recommendations set out in section 6 as a result of the TFG's investigation into what the barriers are to being 'work-ready' and gain employment, and what is being done to help adults in Barnsley overcome these.

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 During 2014/15 one of the OSC TFGs undertook an investigation into what provision is available to enable people in the Borough to be 'work-ready'. As they undertook the investigation, they found this to be a very wide-ranging topic, therefore narrowed their focus to consider the provision available for young people and considered the 'I Know I Can (IKIC)' programme within Barnsley schools. Following this investigation, it was agreed that this work should continue, to consider what provision is available to assist adults in the Borough to be 'work-ready' and gain employment.
- 3.2 It is noted that aside from academic attainment and the ability to carry out tasks in the workplace, employers need 'work-ready' employees who: have the right attitude; are reliable and will turn up on time; are able to communicate effectively and provide good customer care; and can work well as part of a team.
- 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 the barriers are to being 'work-ready' and gain employment, and what is being done to help adults in Barnsley overcome these and obtain work.
- 3.4 The members of this TFG included:

Councillor Paul Hand-Davis (TFG Lead Member), Councillor Phil Birkinshaw, Councillor Malcolm Clements, Councillor Annette Gollick, Councillor Wayne Johnson together with Co-opted Member Mr John Winter.

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

- 4.1 To better understand what the barriers are to being ‘work-ready’ and gain employment, and what is being done to help adults in Barnsley overcome these, the TFG undertook a variety of visits. This involved meeting with a number of local agencies to understand from their perspective what is currently in place and what more could be done.
- 4.2 Initially, the group met with officers from the Council’s Economic Regeneration Service to understand the Barnsley context in terms of the work and skills agenda, including learning about some of the activities currently taking place to help people gain skills to obtain employment.
- 4.3 The group’s investigation led them to meeting with and contacting a number of agencies listed below from the statutory, voluntary and private sectors to: understand the barriers individuals face to gaining employment; the support services available and the barriers they face in delivering services; as well as the local employer’s perspective:

<b>Organisation/Service</b>	<b>Service Provision / ‘Work Readiness’ Perspective</b>
Dearne Electronic Community Village (DECV)	Voluntary agency in the Dearne providing free public access to ICT resources in a friendly, non-intimidating environment to meet individual needs as well as provide employability activities and skills training.
Dearne Employment & Training – (VAB)	Voluntary Action Barnsley provide free drop in sessions in the Dearne offering tailored support to help people find employment.
Jobcentre Plus (JCP) (part of the Government Department for Work and Pensions-DWP)	Provides assistance to those who are unemployed and claiming benefits to find work. This includes support from Employment Support Advisors as well as Disability Employment Advisors.
Barnsley College	Provide adult learning courses as well as specific programmes for the unemployed including employability skills.
BMBC’s Adult & Community Learning Service	Provide information, advice and guidance for learning and work, including courses leading to skills and qualifications, including for those with learning disabilities. Courses support wellbeing as well as progress into or towards employment.
BMBC’s Library Job Clubs	Offer job clubs to help job seekers find and apply for jobs, providing free internet access as well as support from Library Officers.
BMBC’s Health Improvement Officer - Employment & Skills	BMBC Public Health Officer with a specific focus on employment and skills, currently undertaking a mapping exercise to consider support available in Barnsley and provide recommendations for improvements.
Recovery College (SWYPFT)	South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Recovery College offers educational courses and workshops to people accessing Trust mental health services including

	their families and carers. These courses help improve work skills, health and wellbeing and involvement in local initiatives.
McDonalds	Global company offering a variety of local employment, training schemes and development opportunities.
XPO Logistics Supply Chain	Global company and Barnsley's largest employer, offering a variety of local employment, training schemes and development opportunities.

## 5. What the Task & Finish Group found

5.1 Over the last 5 years employment in Barnsley has increased rapidly, however still has a higher unemployment rate than both the regional and national levels. Having met with a variety of organisations and service providers, the TFG found there were a number of barriers faced by those wanting to gain employment, some of which are listed below:

- Ill health (in particular mental ill health) - data shows that in Barnsley, for nearly half of all Employment Support Allowance (ESA) claimants, the main health conditions preventing them from working are mental and behavioural disorders.
- Lack of confidence and low self-esteem – this prevents people from undertaking skill development activities as well as accessing available support services. This can also prevent people being prepared to travel to destinations they are not familiar with.
- Bad experiences at school – this can make people reluctant to engage in learning.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Lack of transport - public transport may not be available to particular locations, even where transport is available it may not be available at all times of day in line with shift patterns e.g. for those who start work very early. It doesn't pay to travel long distances for low-paid jobs due to high travel costs.
- Criminal record.
- Debt - due to delays in benefit payments and rules around claims, this can result in it being financially detrimental for someone to undertake short-term employment. In households where parents are claiming benefits, it can be financially detrimental to have children living with them who undertake employment as it will affect their benefit claim. Lack of funds may mean people are unable to pay for essential qualifications such as gaining vehicle driving licences.
- Lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills and qualifications.
- Lack of IT skills – benefit claimants are required to have basic IT skills in order to complete forms and evidence their search for employment. Also, the majority of jobs require employees to have basic IT skills and even where they don't, often application processes require the use of online processes and IT skills.
- Lack of opportunities to undertake work placements and gain work experience and employability skills.

5.2 The TFG found there were a number of services and initiatives to help people overcome the barriers they were experiencing in gaining employment, many of which were visited as part of this investigation. This included: provision of training and development opportunities; funding to obtain particular qualifications where certain conditions were

met; officers providing information, advice and guidance; as well as mental health support services.

5.3 The group also found that the organisations providing support services faced challenges, some of which include:

- Lack of funding – this includes problems with accessing consistent, long-term funding as organisations providing services were consistently having to make applications to funds which were only available short term. This can result in valuable resources being wasted as time spent establishing services, building relationships and trust in communities can be lost. Services also found they are having to compete for the same limited funding sources.
- Lack of appreciation of individual progress – it was highlighted that funders often only see success as enabling an individual to progress from being out of work to gaining employment. However for many individuals, particularly those who have been out of work for several years, prior to this they need to be able to increase their confidence and change their mind-set from ‘do not want to work’ to ‘would like to gain employment’. Services need to make sure they are able to capture this progress, but funders also need to appreciate that for many people, without investment in early intervention and personalised support to help people gain confidence and overcome personal barriers, they will never progress into employment.
- Lack of knowledge of all other available services in the Borough – as the TFG undertook its investigation it was able to make others aware of provision in the Borough; however there was no one-location where this information was currently available publically or amongst providers.

5.3 The TFG also met with local employers to understand the challenges they faced in recruitment and the opportunities they offer. Both McDonalds and XPO Logistics Supply Chain offer operational to management roles, with comprehensive training and development opportunities from apprenticeships to management training. As the companies are international there are also opportunities to work abroad. Both companies emphasised the importance of ‘work-readiness’ skills alongside basic literacy and numeracy; highlighting that they would be able to provide the training and support to develop and progress employees with these skills.

5.4 In summary, the TFG were reassured and impressed by the support services available to help people in Barnsley gain employment. There was evidence of good partnership working between agencies; committed employees who often went the extra mile to support individuals; and employers who are keen to invest in employees and recognised the importance of their role within local communities.

## **6. Recommendations**

6.1 The TFG support the continuation of all the work which is currently taking place and good practice which is evidenced, including partnership working amongst services and employers. Due to this good work Barnsley’s unemployment rate has reduced dramatically, however it is evident that those still requiring support into employment tend to face multiple and complex barriers and require personalised, one to one support. The TFG also make the following specific recommendations:

6.2 **Recommendation 1: BMBC and local employers offer work experience placements**

To help people gain skills and experience to secure long-term employment, they need to be given the opportunity to practice and develop relevant skills. Many job seekers may have been out of work for a number of years and have not had the opportunity to experience being in modern work places. These placements need to be supportive, thereby enabling individuals to improve their confidence and skills.

6.3 **Recommendation 2: A map of local employment support services is made available and shared with stakeholders**

During their investigation, the TFG were made aware of work currently being undertaken to map current employment support services including those related to health and education, and provide recommendations for improvements. The TFG were able to contribute to this exercise by providing their knowledge of services from this investigation and would recommend that when finalised, this document is shared with all the services listed as well as job seekers. This document will also need to be updated on an on-going basis.

6.4 **Recommendation 3: Need to ensure we secure long term funding and maximise opportunities from the proposed Sheffield City Region Devolution Deal**

To utilise resources effectively, it is important that existing, established services are supported to continue as they have built networks and trust amongst local communities. Support should be provided to local community groups to bid for contracts, including assisting them with application forms and ensuring they have appropriate policies in place to be eligible for contracts. Many individuals facing barriers to employment prefer to seek independent advice and support as they may be reluctant to approach statutory services as they fear this may have negative implications. It is also important that commissioners recognise and appreciate the number of steps that individuals need to progress through to gain employment. Therefore, without investment in early intervention and personalised support to help people gain confidence and overcome personal barriers, they will never progress into employment.

6.5 **Recommendation 4: Opportunities to support people trying to obtain employment should be listed as part of BMBC's Employer Supported Volunteering Scheme**

Council employees have a wealth of knowledge and skills which they could share with local job seekers, including IT skills, how to complete applications as well as employability skills required in the workplace.

6.6 **Recommendation 5: We recommend an all-member information brief (AMIB) is held so that ALL Members are aware of and can share the available opportunities with their communities**

This will help to raise awareness of the employment support opportunities available so that Members are better able to promote opportunities in their wards. All Members need to promote that there are jobs available in Barnsley and be aware of the locally used 'ABC' terminology that 'Any job' can then lead to a 'Better job' and then a 'Career'.

6.7 **Recommendation 6: The OSC facilitates consideration of BMBC's annual Adult Skills and Community Learning Service (ASCL) Self Assessment Review (SAR)**

To assist with the governance of the ASCL service, in-line with the review they undertake for their funding and Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) requirements,

following a visit to the service, the TFG reviewed their 2014/15 SAR. The ongoing review of this service will enable Members to be aware of services being delivered. This will also include the important monitoring of the uptake of 'wellbeing' and 'hobby' courses, which facilitate engagement with people, improve their confidence and encourage them to undertake formal skill qualifications and improve employability skills.

**6.8 Recommendation 7: The OSC facilitates a TFG to investigate how Barnsley can increase the availability of higher level skills and jobs**

Having previously considered 'work-readiness' skill development and employment support opportunities for young people and adults in the Borough, the TFG recommends the OSC investigates what is being done to: assist residents to obtain higher level skills; make suitable employment opportunities available; as well as consider what barriers may be faced in obtaining these jobs. The TFG recognises that the quality of jobs and availability of a skilled workforce is important for the Borough's economic growth.

The TFG would 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 to support local people to overcome the many barriers they may face to gain employment including skill development, health difficulties and financial challenges. The extent of these services varies across the Borough depending on identified need in the local area; however there are numerous support services accessible to all communities in Barnsley.

**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 should be shared and celebrated. It is important that the document to map local employment support services is developed and shared with all relevant stakeholders. By holding an AMIB, Members will be better aware of available programmes to share with their communities and will be able to avoid duplication by being able to identify what services exist.

## **11. Consultations**

- 11.1 Consultations have taken place with Councillors Hand-Davis (TFG Lead Member), P. Birkinshaw, Clements, Gollick, Johnson, Co-opted Member John Winter, Dave Coggrave-McDonalds, Ken Perritt-XPO Logistics Supply Chain and Council Officers David Shepherd, Tom Smith and the Senior Management Team.

## **12. The Corporate Plan 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 the high costs of people being on welfare benefits as well as improve their health and wellbeing.

## **13. Tackling health inequalities**

- 13.1 As recognised in the Marmot Review (2010) 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives', to reduce health inequalities, one of the six key national policy objectives is to 'create fair employment and good work for all'. This research acknowledges the contribution unemployment has to poor health and therefore its importance in reducing health inequalities. Therefore it is vital that the work outlined in this report continues and that activity is targeted at the Borough's lower socioeconomic groups to aid in tackling health inequalities.

## **14. Risk management issues**

- 14.1 This issue relates to the following risks currently logged on the Council's Strategic Risk Register (SRR), as follows:
- 3034 - Lack of Educational Attainment (whilst the focus of this risk relates to attainment within schools and educational settings, elements of this risk are pitched at broader educational outcomes within the Borough); and,
  - 3543 - Failure to ensure the adequate supply of land for housing and commercial property growth (whilst this risk focuses on the availability of land to enable development opportunities, elements of the mitigations for this risk touch on the opportunities present within the regional devolution deal, referenced in section 6.4 of this report).
- 14.2 Furthermore, risk owners within Business Unit 4 (Economic Regeneration) will be encouraged to remain cognisant of the recommendations detailed within this report.
- 14.3 The recommendations detailed in section 6 should be considered by the relevant risk owner in light of the SRR.
- 14.4 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 adults in Barnsley to be cognisant of these risks.

**15. Promoting equality & diversity and social inclusion**

15.1 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. The TFG found that support services exist for people who face some of the greatest barriers to work such as people with mental health problems or learning difficulties including the Recovery College provided by SWYPFT and specific Disability Employment Advisors available at JCP. The TFG acknowledge however that many barriers are faced by diverse groups in accessing employment which creates inequality in the rates of worklessness amongst different groups.

**16. Reduction of crime & disorder**

16.1 Engaging 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.


**17. Glossary**

AMIB – All Member Information Brief  
ASCL - Adult Skills and Community Learning Service  
BMBC – Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council  
IKIC – I know I Can Programme  
JCP – Jobcentre Plus  
Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education  
OSC – Overview and Scrutiny  
SAR – Self Assessment Review  
SWYPFT – South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust  
TFG – Task and Finish Group  
VAB – Voluntary Action Barnsley

**18. Background papers**

- Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group Report on 'Work Readiness' – Young People (Cab.25.3.2015/7.3):  
<http://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/Data/Cabinet/201503251000/Agenda/item%20f7.3.pdf>
- Marmot Review (2010) – Fair Society, Healthy Lives:  
<http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/Content/FileManager/pdf/fairsocietyhealthylives.pdf>

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Financial Implications / Consultation ...		25/02/16
<i>(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer where no financial implications)</i>		