

Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee Report

Review of Youth Unemployment

November 2014

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Chair's Foreword

Everyone we have spoken to during this review has recognised that youth unemployment is a priority in Telford and Wrekin and we have received evidence of the work each of the organisations is doing to reduce the rate of youth unemployment. It can be easy during a Scrutiny Review to focus on the negative findings and in the latter stages of the review during discussions with some partner organisations I have become aware of some of the joint working that is taking place across sectors. I recognise that this report perhaps does not fully set out the relationships that do already exist between our FE colleges and local employers e.g. that TCAT is working with Reed recruitment agency and New College has a full time Recruitment Officer to ensure that students are given the opportunity to apply for jobs with local employers. The opening of the Automotive Engineering Centre at TCAT has been supported by many local employers and is a great example of what can be achieved.

However, despite these examples of good practice – all the organisations we spoke to recognised that further work is required and that there is a need to ensure that this is co-ordinated and funded at a strategic level. The Committee recognised the commitment made by the Council and the leadership role it is developing as demonstrated through the Job Junction Scheme and Jobs Fair. There is an opportunity for the Council's role to be further developed through a longer term skills strategy and to ensure that organisations are working together and sharing information to meet the needs of all the young people in the Borough and our local employers. We have also made some practical suggestions about how to help young people access the Job Junctions and to ensure that the Council can demonstrate these outcomes.

I want to thank everyone who has taken part in this review. Many of the organisations who have taken part in this review are not required by law to participate in Local Government Scrutiny but I have been pleased that everyone we asked to provide information and attend meetings did so - and in a spirit of partnership working. This demonstrates the unique role that Scrutiny can have in both holding the Council Executive to account and bringing organisations together to find solutions. I also want to thank the apprentices who came to speak to us – they demonstrated a commitment and enthusiasm for their work and are a credit to themselves and the Council. Finally I would like to recognise the work of the previous chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, Cllr. Mike Ion, who instigated this work with the Committee last year.

Cllr. Kevin Guy
Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee

Introduction

The rise in the level of youth unemployment precipitated by the financial crisis and ensuing recession became a matter of concern in the UK and across Europe.

Members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee were concerned that the rate of youth unemployment in Telford and Wrekin was so high and that it was significantly higher than national and regional average rates. In November 2013 the rate in Telford and Wrekin was 32.1% compared to 24.6% regionally and 20.8% nationally, equating to around 3,700 young people.

The committee was concerned about how this could affect the life chances of so many young people in the borough and the implications of the loss of so much potential on the on prosperity of the borough as a whole.

The committee decided to review what provision was available to support young people into work focussing on three key lines of enquiry:

1. To investigate what barriers exist locally for young people (aged 16-24) to getting work
2. To examine whether all agencies are playing their part in supporting young people into work
3. To investigate whether there are any gaps and/or overlaps in current provision.

Members took evidence from the Cabinet member Neighbourhood Services, Employment & Skills, senior Council officers, Principals and officers of FE providers, Jobcentre Plus, Work Programme prime contractors and provider, the Marches LEP Skills Champion, Chair of the Telford Business Board and some of the Council's apprentices who had experienced unemployment. Members also visited a number of Job Junctions to see them in action and to hear the views of staff and customers.

The committee would like to thank all those who took the time to meet with them or to support the review.

The review took place between November 2013 and September 2014. In May 2014 changes were made to the membership of the committee at Annual Council. Cllr. Mike Ion stepped down as Chair and was Cllr. Kevin Guy was appointed as Chair, and Cllr. Scammell was appointed to replace Cllr. Hope.

Overview and main findings

The committee considered a wealth of information presented during the review.

A presentation to the committee in November 2013 set the context for the review and in January 2014 the Cabinet report Tackling Youth Unemployment – Our Commitment set out additional background information and a number of Pledges and investment priorities which were adopted as the cornerstone of the Council's youth unemployment strategy. In September 2014 the committee received an update on the trend in youth unemployment and progress towards delivery of the Pledges.

The update showed that between November 2013 and March 2014, youth unemployment in the borough had fallen from 32.1% to 26.4%. Comparable regional and national figures were 24.6% to 22.3% and 20.8% to 19.3% respectively – in other words, youth unemployment was falling at a faster rate in Telford and Wrekin than the regional or national average rate.

Key elements of the committee's work were looking at FE provision, DWP's work programme and the effectiveness of Job Junctions, the Jobs Fair and other Council funded provision.

The committee concluded that the direction of travel is good in terms of the Council's response to the issue and the rate of reduction of youth unemployment in the borough. Members commended the great strides that have been taken, in particular:

- The designation of Executive and officer responsibility for skills and employment
- The decision to move the Skills Team from education services to business support to enable closer alignment of skills provision with business needs
- The adoption of the Pledges and the additional £1.3m investment
- The Council's engagement with the Marches LEP Skills Board and Skills Plan so Telford & Wrekin is prepared to bid for funding allocations flowing through the LEP
- The excellent work of officers in delivering the Jobs Fair, the Job Junctions, the Job Box Mentors and the development of a coherent offering under the Job Box brand to streamline and improve access to the range of support services.

Although the downward trajectory of youth unemployment is encouraging there is a long way to go: 26.4% youth unemployment means there are around 3,200 individual young people aged 16-24 not in education, training or employment.

The following section of this report sets out in detail the issues identified by the review and a number of recommendations aimed at addressing the issues. The committee accepts that a huge amount of good work has already gone into, and continues in, tackling youth unemployment and the recommendations in this report are intended to build on this work to strengthen the position further.

Key issues, conclusions and recommendations

Committee's conclusions	How the issue was identified and what evidence was considered	Recommendations
Developing the role of the Council in providing a strategic lead in driving the skills agenda with partners across the borough and the need to align employment opportunities and future skills needs with FE provision		
<p>Key to tackling youth unemployment and growing the local economy is to ensure the skills that employers need are available in the local labour market and at the right time.</p> <p>The committee agreed that the Council should take a strategic lead in driving the skills agenda forward across the borough and that the Council is well placed to lead on skills identification.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council acknowledged it has a duty to lead in driving forward the strategy to tackle youth unemployment • Cabinet agreed a number of Pledges for the Council in tackling youth unemployment in its role as Facilitator and Broker • College Principals felt the Council had a role to play as strategic lead, including the development of a skills plan to project business needs, co-ordinating the alignment of resources and data sharing • An employer view was that public sector agencies need to be better at identifying and understanding business needs • A written submission from one of DWP's prime Work Programme contractors stated that "Serco's approach is achieved by working alongside strategic and delivery partners, including local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, employers, community regeneration groups, sector skills councils and 	<p>1.The Council should continue to develop its strategic role in leading the skills agenda across the borough.</p> <p>2.This role should include developing a longer term (3 years) Skills Strategy for the borough within 6 months which should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide detailed skills needs projections for businesses in the borough linked to employment opportunities in other LEP areas to inform skills planning • Show how connections between businesses and the education sector (schools, FE and HE) will be further developed and strengthened, including exploring sponsorship opportunities. • Set clear outcomes that will be used to evaluate the success of the strategy and the Council's investment to enable young people to find and remain employed in the long term. <p>3.Cabinet should work with the LEP to access funding opportunities to support the</p>

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	<p>Government departments to ensure that the Work Programme complements, rather than duplicates, existing employment and training provision.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumulative figures for the Work Programme in Telford and Wrekin to March 2014 showed 770 JSA claimants aged 18-24 had been referred to the work programme and there had been 222 job outcomes. 	<p>development and delivery of the strategy.</p> <p>4.The Council should build links with the two Work Programme prime contractors operating across Telford and Wrekin to explore how provision can be better joined-up.</p>
The need to align employment opportunities and future skills needs with FE provision		
<p>The committee was impressed by the quality of provision offered by both colleges and agreed the borough was fortunate to be served by 2 providers with vision and ambition. Both were going beyond their remit as FE providers in terms of engaging hard-to-reach young people.</p> <p>Members acknowledged there were arguments on both sides of the merger argument but felt that with new Principals at both colleges now is an opportune time for the colleges to reconsider coming together to look at provision across the borough in a more strategic and holistic way. This could be as a federated body with shared governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Marches LEP Skills Plan identified “delivering skills required for business growth” and “developing shared responsibility for skills through effective partnerships” as priorities. The LEP Skills Board Chair acknowledged connections between businesses and FE could be stronger and that future skills demands need to be fed through to FE providers in a timely way. • A view from an employer that there needs to be better connections between business and FE • Members visited the two FE colleges (TCAT and New College) and spoke to the Principals of both. Members noted that 	<p>5.Cabinet should challenge the colleges to show how they make decisions about provision and how provision meets the needs businesses and of people across the borough.</p> <p>6.Linked to the recommendation above the Council should broker a discussion between the Principals of the FE providers to reconsider the option of a joint delivery model. In the short term, consider setting up a joint working group/link group, made up of staff from both colleges, who could meet periodically to discuss ways forward for more joint working on the subject of youth employment.</p>

Committee's conclusions	How the issue was identified and what evidence was considered	Recommendations
<p>and managements structures rather than a merger. Blackburn could provide a model.</p>	<p>college provision is concentrated in the north of the borough and that there could be the potential for duplication of resources or provision. Members heard there had been discussions about a possible FE merger which had stalled.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Views of the college Principals on the question of a potential merger. One view was that competition is good, and as long as providers focus on the students, having separate colleges is not an impediment to securing better opportunities for young people. The other view was that one strategic provider could serve the interests of the borough better but it would need to be a genuine merger and not a take-over of one institution by another. 	
<p>The need to identify who and where young unemployed people are so that help can be targeted towards them</p>		
<p>The committee welcomed the pro-active approach of the Council in identifying people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data showed there are a significant number of young people unemployed but 	<p>7.The Strategy should make proposals for on-going data-sharing mechanisms with</p>

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<p>to target for support but were concerned that the database will quickly become out of date and a more permanent data sharing solution needs to be found</p>	<p>not claiming benefits who will not show up on the claimant count</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has a statutory duty to track young people up to age 19 and officers were confident this happens. There is no statutory duty to track post-19 except adults with learning disabilities aged 20-24 and there is a risk that young people fall from sight • Data protection precludes DWP sharing personal details about individual claimants meaning the Council cannot proactively target support. Through a secondment from DWP to the Council, Members heard in November 2013 that a database of c.300 claimants aged 18-24 had been built up. The approach was to nudge those closest to the labour market into work and to reach those furthest away from the labour market by knocking on doors and re-engaging them through an approach based on their needs. • Jobcentre Plus could not add a tick-box to their forms for clients to give permission for their details to be shared with the Council without a change of national policy • New College funds a project for a provider 	<p>reference to Jobcentre Plus and FE colleges to identify hard-to-reach young people and improve destination tracking.</p>

Committee's conclusions	How the issue was identified and what evidence was considered	Recommendations
	<p>to work in local communities and knock on doors to reach disengaged young people and TCAT employ 5 workers whose role is to engage with communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff in Job Junctions said they needed to know who and where unemployed young people are to target them for help. 	
<p>The need to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities and to support small companies to offer apprenticeships</p>		
<p>The committee supports the development of the Apprenticeship Hub and a brokerage service for local employers to promote apprenticeships and reduce the administrative burden on businesses.</p> <p>One member raised questions about the quality standards of apprenticeships which were not within the scope of this review but the committee agreed was a valid issue to explore.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are 4,700 SMEs in the borough – if half offered an apprenticeship it could wipe out youth unemployment • Approximately 20% of businesses in Telford and Wrekin had offered an apprenticeship in 2013 • The LEP Skills Plan identified approximately 25% of businesses would be interested in offering a government supported traineeship program where a young person gained periods of work experience • The Chair of the Telford Business Board said there is a lack of awareness in the private sector about grants and support available to help them offer apprenticeships. • The Chair of the Telford Business Board 	<p>8.The Council should prioritise the development of the Apprenticeship Hub as a Pledge and this should include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assigning a named point of contact to each business b) Proactively targeting of the 25% of businesses identified by the LEP as interested but not having time to get involved c) Promote the Hub through business networks including the Telford Business Board, Telford Business Partnership and the Chamber of Commerce d) Note that the Scrutiny Committee would support a bid for funding through the LEP to support this work.

Committee's conclusions	How the issue was identified and what evidence was considered	Recommendations
	<p>raised concerns about providers' lack of understanding about business needs which results in a mismatch between the skills needed by businesses offering work placements and the skills of the young person placed with the company. A poor experience can deter further involvement.</p>	<p>9.The Council should monitor and report on the progression of care leavers and where appropriate prioritise care leavers for Council apprenticeships.</p>
<p>The need for a co-ordinated single point of entry to services so young people and their parents know where to look for help and whether there are any gaps in provision</p>		
<p>The Committee agreed that the Council has done a good job in developing the Job Box website as a virtual, one-stop-shop for people to access support and job vacancies.</p> <p>Members thought the website is well laid out and easy to use and were pleased to see it linked into employer and recruitment agency vacancies.</p> <p>The Committee was also pleased to hear that an App was being developed to increase penetration into the youth market.</p> <p>The committee commended the apprentices who attended a scrutiny committee meeting as a credit to the team of apprentices and to themselves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In November 2013 a presentation to the committee listed over 20 interventions which play a role in helping young people into work, from training providers to targeted support programmes to wider services such as improving school attendance and mental health services. A key question was how young people and their parents know what support is available and how to access it. • Feedback from Council apprentices showed very diverse routes which had led them to the apprenticeship (Connexions, parents, Relate, social worker, employment fair) but that there was an issue with young people not knowing where to go for help. • Apprentices identified a need for work experience opportunities with a check list 	<p>10.Efforts should be made to target marketing of the Job Box website to parents so they know how to help their children.</p> <p>11.Consider the suggestions put forward by the Council's apprentices for tackling youth unemployment set out in Appendix 1, noting that Members do not support the principle of offering monetary incentives to engage young people.</p>

Committee's conclusions	How the issue was identified and what evidence was considered	Recommendations
	<p>to show prospective employers what they have done</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One apprentice had consulted other apprentices to gather ideas about how to tackle youth unemployment and a list of ideas was provided to the committee 	
<p>Whether the Council's investment in the Jobs Fair and Job Junctions deliver value for money and the programmes funded by the Council's £1.3m investment are sustainable</p>		
<p>The committee agreed tackling youth unemployment is a key priority for the Council and should remain so. The additional £1.3m investment to tackle the issue is supported.</p> <p>The Committee commended officers on the success of the Job Junctions and the Jobs Fair but agreed that further work was needed to monitor performance over the longer term in order to evidence their value for money.</p> <p>Members agreed the Job Junctions and Job Box Mentors were filling a gap in provision by offering independent, expert one-to-one support in venues accessible to local communities.</p> <p>The committee was pleased to hear that</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members visited several Job Junction sessions in different locations to see them in action and get feedback from staff and customers. Feedback from customers was positive. Feedback from members based on the visits was positive in terms of how staff were supporting people. Attendance was good in the established venues but attendance by young people was poor. Members commended the excellent work of staff. • Data on Job Junctions showed attendance was growing and 105 people had been helped into work • Members were not provided with detailed costs of the Job Junctions • Data on the cost and outcomes from the Jobs Fair showed 69 vacancies filled from the fair at a pro-rata cost of £287 	<p>12.The Council should review performance of the Job Junctions and develop proposals to secure future funding, potentially through the LEP, to support the development of the service. This should be reported back to the committee in 12 months.</p> <p>Members ask that the following suggestions are considered :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put systems in place to monitor performance in terms of job outcomes to evidence the added value of Job Junctions in helping people into work to support future funding bids. • Explore New College as a partner in the Job Junctions for delivery, referrals and links with the hard-to-reach project • Members felt the Job Junctions could be delivering wider benefits such as social

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<p>Telford & Wrekin is supporting the LEP Skills Board and this should position the authority to benefit from future funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council had invested £1.3m into interventions from early delivery of savings • The Council does not benefit from DWP funding for helping people into job such as invested in the work programme • The Council is not eligible as an employer for apprenticeship grants 	<p>contacts or improvements to mental health. There should be referral mechanisms with wider council services and partners, particularly GPs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The referral mechanisms between FutureFocus / Turnaround and Job Junctions should be strengthened so young people continue to access help and do not fall through the net • Develop a customer feedback form to identify any gaps in provision to inform the development of provision and courses. • Consider providing a telephone for customer use with appropriate safeguards. • Consider increasing the number of computers in Sutton Hill to 16 • Consider more central venues for the Newport Job Junction including the option of using the library • Improve internal and external signage • Consult young people on how they want to be engaged and develop a strategy which supports their greater engagement with the Job Junctions • Information from the database of young unemployed people should be shared

Committee's conclusions	How the issue was identified and what evidence was considered	Recommendations
		<p>with staff in Job Junctions so they are able to target support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the benefits of bringing employers and recruitment agencies into the Job Junctions to deliver sessions about what employers are looking for and to encourage employers to see the Job Junctions as a positive recruitment channel. Consider the potential to develop as an income generation service.
Holding the Executive to account and monitoring the implementation of recommendations accepted		
<p>The committee noted the Cabinet members' willingness to be held to account for delivery of the Pledges. The Committee will also monitor the implementation of the recommendations in this report accepted by Cabinet.</p>		<p>13.Cabinet to note that the committee will monitor the implementation of the recommendations in this report accepted by Cabinet and delivery of the Pledges at a future meeting.</p>

Summary of recommendations

Developing the role of the Council in providing a strategic lead in driving the skills agenda with partners across the borough and the need to align employment opportunities and future skills needs with FE provision

1. The Council should continue to develop its strategic role in leading the skills agenda across the borough.
2. This role should include developing a longer term (3 years) Skills Strategy for the borough within 6 months which should:
 - a) Provide detailed skills needs projections for businesses in the borough linked to employment opportunities in other LEP areas to inform skills planning
 - b) Show how connections between businesses and the education sector (schools, FE and HE) will be developed and strengthened, including exploring sponsorship opportunities.
 - c) Set clear outcomes that will be used to evaluate the success of the strategy and the Council's investment to enable young people to find and remain employed in the long term.
3. Cabinet should work with the LEP to access funding opportunities to support the development and delivery of the strategy.
4. The Council should build links with the two Work Programme prime contractors operating across Telford and Wrekin to explore how provision can be better joined-up.
5. Cabinet should challenge the colleges to show how they make decisions about provision and how provision meets the needs businesses and of people across the borough.
6. Linked to the recommendation above the Council should broker a discussion between the Principals of the FE providers to reconsider the option of a joint delivery model. In the short term, consider setting up a joint working group/link group, made up of staff from both colleges, who could meet periodically to discuss ways forward for more joint working on the subject of youth employment.
7. The Strategy should make proposals for on-going data-sharing mechanisms with reference to Jobcentre Plus and FE colleges to identify hard-to-reach young people and improve destination tracking.

The need to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities and to support small companies to offer apprenticeships

8. The Council should prioritise the development of the Apprenticeship Hub as a Pledge and this should include:
 - a) Assigning a named point of contact to each business
 - b) Proactively targeting of the 25% of businesses identified by the LEP as interested but not having time to get involved

- c) Promote the Hub through business networks including the Telford Business Board, Telford Business Partnership and the Chamber of Commerce
- d) Note that the Scrutiny Committee would support a bid for funding through the LEP to support this work.

9. The Council should monitor and report on the progression of care leavers and where appropriate prioritise care leavers for Council apprenticeships.

The need for a co-ordinated single point of entry to services so young people and their parents know where to look for help and whether there are any gaps in provision

10. Efforts should be made to target marketing of the Job Box website to parents so they know how to help their children.

11. Consider the suggestions put forward by the Council's apprentices for tackling youth unemployment, noting that Members do not support the principle of offering monetary incentives to engage young people.

Whether the Council's investment in the Jobs Fair and Job Junctions deliver value for money and the programmes funded by the Council's £1.3m investment are sustainable

12. The Council should review performance of the Job Junctions and develop proposals to secure future funding, potentially through the LEP, to support the development of the service. This should be reported back to the committee in 12 months.

Members ask that the following suggestions are considered:

- Put systems in place to monitor performance in terms of job outcomes to evidence the added value of Job Junctions in helping people into work to support future funding bids.
- Explore New College as a partner in the Job Junctions for delivery, referrals and links with the hard-to-reach project
- Members felt the Job Junctions could be delivering wider benefits such as social contacts or improvements to mental health. There should be referral mechanisms with wider council services and partners, particularly GPs.
- The referral mechanisms between FutureFocus / Turnaround and Job Junctions should be strengthened so young people continue to access help and do not fall through the net
- Develop a customer feedback form to identify any gaps in provision to inform the development of provision and courses.
- Consider providing a telephone for customer use with appropriate safeguards.
- Consider increasing the number of computers in Sutton Hill to 16
- Consider more central venues for the Newport Job Junction including the option of using the library
- Improve internal and external signage
- Consult young people on how they want to be engaged and develop a strategy which supports their greater engagement with the Job Junctions
- Information from the database of young unemployed people should be shared

with staff in Job Junctions so they are able to target support.

- Consider the benefits of bringing employers and recruitment agencies into the Job Junctions to deliver sessions about what employers are looking for and to encourage employers to see the Job Junctions as a positive recruitment channel. Consider the potential to develop as an income generation service.

Holding the Executive to account and monitoring the implementation of recommendations accepted

13. Cabinet to note that the committee will monitor the implementation of the recommendations in this report accepted by Cabinet and delivery of the Pledges at a future meeting.

Acknowledgements

Members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Cllr. Kevin Guy (Chair)
Cllr. Stephen Burrell
Cllr. Gill Green
Cllr. Jackie Loveridge
Cllr. Alan Mackenzie
Cllr. Jane Pinter
Cllr. Roy Scammell
Cllr. Chris Turley
Cllr. Mike Ion (Chair to May 2014)
Cllr. Tracy Hope (member until May 2014)
Dr. Shaukat Ali - HE representative
Mr. A. Atkinson - Catholic Diocesan representative
Mr. Roger Avey - Town & Parish Council representative
Ms. Emma Ofori - Secondary Parent Governor representative
Mr. Steve Rayner - Anglican Diocesan representative
Ms. Mel Ward - Primary Parent Governor representative

Witnesses

The committee would like to thank the following people for taking the time to meet them:

- Cllr. Shaun Davies, Cabinet Member Neighbourhood Services, Employment & Skills
- Kate Callis, Assistant Director Development, Business & Employment
- Sue Marston, Skills Service Delivery Manager
- Jan Ellis, Principal & Chief Executive, Telford College of Arts & Technology (Feb 2014)
- Chris Scott, College Deputy Principal, Telford College of Arts & Technology (Feb 2014)
- Bev Jackson, Assistant Principal – Learner Services, Telford College of Arts & Technology
- Garry Philips, Principal and CEO, New College Telford (March 2014)
- Catherine Whitehead, Assistant Principal, Student Voice and Reputation, New College
- Steve Orton, Employer Manager, Jobcentre Plus Telford and Wrekin
- Liz Harding, County Training
- Paul Hinkins, Chair of the Telford Business Board and Marches LEP Board member
- Prof. Ian Oakes, Higher Education Champion on the Marches LEP Board and Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Wolverhampton
- Nathaniel Sambrook, Amy Giles and James Doyle, Council apprentices

The committee would also like to thank Marie Blake and her team of staff working in the Job Junctions for supporting the member visits and for their valuable insights, in particular Steve Blake, Nigel Lunn and customers who took time to talk to the members.

Key written evidence

- Youth Unemployment Presentation (November 2013)
- Telford College of Arts & Technology Presentation (November 2013)
- Tackling Youth Unemployment – Our Commitment, Cabinet Report (January 2014)
- Jobcentre Plus – Customer Journey Presentation (February 2014)

- ONS claimant flows for Telford and Wrekin and breakdowns to small areas (February 2014)
- Ideas for Youth Unemployment from Telford & Wrekin apprentices (February 2014)
- New College Telford Presentation (March 2014)
- DWP Work Programme Official Statistics to March 2014 and cumulative referrals and job outcomes for Telford and Wrekin to March 2014
- Serco Briefing on Work Programme outcomes in Telford and Wrekin, The Work Programme Executive Summary and the Customer Charter (August 2014)
- Marches Skills Plan Presentation (September 2014)
- The Marches Skills Plan 2013-2015 and First Annual Review October 2013
- Update on Youth Unemployment report including data on Job Junction and Jobs Fair outcomes (September 2014)
- Tackling Youth Unemployment – Progress to Date, Cabinet Report (September 2014)

Suggestions Following Discussion with Council Apprentices

Following discussions with colleagues, members of the public and 30 young people aged between 16-24 the following suggestions were put forward by an apprentice employed by the Council who had met with the Scrutiny Committee as part of the Review:

- **Up – Front Wage:** Upon starting either a job or an apprenticeship, I believe the wage should be put up-front, this is due to the growing numbers in youth debt, it is a well known fact that money is the main incentive for anyone to go into a job, so in a way to get youths into employment perhaps an up – front wage could be a good idea.
- **Coffee Morning** – This is due to the lack of knowledge about certain jobs, as it would be a casual informal discussion between an employer and members of the public, discussing the ins and outs of what their job warrants, for instance business administration, discussing the transfer and distribution of data. As it would be casual and have free beverages I believe it would be excellent, perhaps set up in a central location such as First Point.
- **Voucher** – Perhaps as an incentive to want to get to the interview stage, those who are successful get a £10 -£25 Telford town centre gift card, whether successful or unsuccessful in getting the job.
- **Job prospects** – Following the National Entrepreneur Week where small business owners came together to discuss expansion within Telford & Wrekin, I believe that a scheme should be set up with these small businesses to enlarge their business, they require more staff to achieve this goal and money, we have the demand from a large number of would – be employees and due to the new government Wage incentive scheme which entitles an employer a sum of money upon employing a youth. Following the initial training the Youth would then be entitled to qualify for a full time position within the company.
- **Free Driving Lessons** – In most Jobs the employee needs to be flexible, such as my own position, where I travel around Telford a lot via public transport, however, public transport is defiantly not reliable. Due to the low wage packet received by Apprenticeships (roughly £99 p/w), I believe they should warrant for free driving lessons whilst in their apprenticeship, whether car or motorbike. (This idea was given to me by about 25 of the 30 youths I spoke to.)
- **Longer Work experience perhaps 3 x 2 weeks in Years 9, 10 & 11** - In order for youths to get a taste of employment I believe the single taste they are given in year 10 is not enough, also our minds are constantly changing regarding our careers so the taster they have in Year 10 may not be anything to do with the career path they choose. If warranting 3 x 2 weeks is not an option due to age or other aspects, perhaps expanding the 2 weeks in year 10 to a month with the possibility of 2 separate placements is an option.

Other than Incentives a few other ideas are:

Reducing the high aspects of jobs that Youths hold - By this I mean, if a youth's passion is in football and their goal is to be an International sports star, this does not mean, that we should not keep that passion alight, however show them other career aspects within football, Manager, Coach, Teacher e.t.c. Show them the jobs behind the scenes, not just the glory, allow them to see that their maybe a CEO to a company however in order to attain that position he had to climb up the ladder, so show them each step the CEO took to achieve their position.

I work with CV's (Curriculum Vitae) and a main segment is that of Key skills the skills a would be employee has that would keep an employer interested in them.

Key Skills – These are their personal skills that may be interesting to an employer, for example if a Youth wishes to gain employment within Software in ICT, they need the knowledge of JAVA, an international company who works with JAVA and is looking to recruit Apprentices, Cap-Gemini could be used as a training provider. If a Youth wishes to gain employment in sport a key skill would be the knowledge of coaching a football team, which perhaps Telford AFC could provide a 2 to 3 day training course.

An increasing number of youths are starting to claim job seekers as an income, and due to the nature of an apprenticeship the wage is only slightly more. If a young mother is claiming income support and housing benefit and wishes to go into employment, she will lose most if not all of her housing benefit and most if not all of her income support, the average rent for a property is roughly £475 a month for a two bed property, an apprenticeship wage is £430 roughly a month, not only would they be unable to pay for their rent, this has not taken into account shopping, baby care and bills. If it is our wish for young mothers especially to go into employment, I believe we as a council must set up a scheme to help reduce the stress from them, perhaps letting them keep their full housing benefit.

Housing benefit is one of the main issues surrounding the transfer of Youths on benefits to Youths in employment.

On a lighter note, there are services we provide that help Youths in Telford and Wrekin Council a few of these are:

- Telford Job junctions
- TCAT
- Connexions
- Relate
- Employment Coaches
- Turn Around
- NCS

Other suggestions from Apprentices put forward at the meeting with the Scrutiny Committee:

- Need to publicise NUS membership to apprentices so they can access discounts

- Apprenticeships could be promoted in the council newsletter. It should be eye catching, perhaps next to an article which people will be interested in. Could be a series “The life of an apprentice” featuring a different apprentice each time.