



Report of: **Corporate Director for Environment and Regeneration**

Meeting of:	Date	Agenda item	Ward(s)
Policy and Performance Scrutiny committee			All

Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt
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SUBJECT: BEST Scrutiny Review 12 month report

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 In March 2015 the Policy and Performance Review Committee initiated a short Scrutiny Review of the work of the BEST team. The Committee produced its final report and recommendations in September 2015
- 1.2 The conclusion of the scrutiny review and its full list of recommendations are attached as Appendix A.
- 1.3 The Chief Executive's department agreed on a number of key activities in response to the recommendations made. These are attached as Appendix B.
- 1.4 This report provides an update on activity in relation to the recommendations made during the Scrutiny Committee and provides a commentary on the effectiveness of the delivery

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note Council activity over the past year (Section 4) and progress against the scrutiny recommendations (Section 5 and Appendix C)
- 2.2 To note that further progress with regard to young people will be reported under the ongoing review of Childrens service currently underway

3. Background

- 3.1 The aim of the initial review was to examine concerns about the service offered by the BEST team to

unemployed residents and to ensure that the new Islington Learning, Skills and Employment service improved the offer to residents

3.2 The recommendations were broadly grouped into three key areas:

Young People

Improve the support for young people and increase apprenticeships and training opportunities.

Adults

More and better quality work experience for adults to build their skills and improve their employment opportunities.

Promotion of a personalised approach to support for unemployed residents

Build on the work of the iWork service and develop a strong outreach and communications strategy, including systems for resident feedback

4. Update on Council's activity

4.1 In response to the Employment commission an internal reorganisation merged the BEST team with iWork and Adult and Community learning (ACL) to form the new Learning Skills and Employment Services.(LSE) Within this division there were a number of new teams, the iWork Youth Employment team, iWork Employment Support and iWork for Business. Aligning employment support with the ACL service has allowed services to work together to create clearer pathways for learners into employment .

4.2 The Learning Skills and Employment service has focused on the recommendations made by the scrutiny panel in the past 12 months, and embedded them into the work plans for implementing the recommendations of the Islington Employment Commission. Full details of activity is shown in Appendix C.

a) Young People

4.3 Youth Employment team (YET) have continued to develop the councils internal apprenticeship programme as a model of good practise . There has recently been an agreement to include a post within HR dedicated to supporting council departments to identify apprenticeship opportunities, and to create more capacity for supporting candidates and employed apprentices to progress and make the most of the opportunities offered. This will have a significant impact on the quality of the support offered as there can be up to 50 young people on the caseload at any one time
Challenges remain ; - departments facing a demand for ongoing savings find it difficult to identify growth and managers are pressed for time. However apprenticeships are a strong pathway into good careers, and can open up new talent for hard to recruit to roles. YET have piloted aligning vacancies with the academic year, which proved to be a good model and made them more accessible to young people as well as going some way to give apprentices parity of esteem with other pathways. YET will continue to work with colleagues in the council and employers to use this model, as well as offering apprentices throughout the school year to ensure those that are not in education, employment or training have opportunities throughout the year.

4.4 YET have also encouraged managers to offer traineeships without which a number of young people would be excluded from our apprenticeship opportunities. Traineeships have been identified as crucial in supporting some of our hardest to reach NEET and at risk of being NEET, who are furthest away from the job market, as a stepping stone to apprenticeships. However, traineeships do use considerable amount of council resource. This year we ran multi-skilled traineeship for the council's Housing Repairs Service which 5 young people completed. We are looking at developing 2 more cohorts, one in repairs and one in accountancy.

4.5 YET have undertaken a programme of initiatives designed to engage young adults aged 18-24 and to

offer them real opportunities . These include the ASPIRE speednetworking events, and industry tasters which are run in partnership with external colleagues such as Arsenal in the Community.

- 4.6 The Saturday jobs scheme has now been running for 3 terms and is beginning to be recognised by schools as a positive opportunity for pupils at risk of being NEET. Local retailers, restaurants, and now Arsenal, have taken on Saturday job placements.

b) Adults

- 4.7 GET SET FOR WORK (GSFW) has targeted those with the most barriers to the labour market, meaning the opportunities are only offered to residents who have been unemployed for over a year, or who face health barriers . This has been in alignment with the new Wellbeing and Work partnership which has stimulated a number of activities to better support residents with health barriers to engage in the labour market . Many of these have been engaged via Adult and community learning. To date GSFW has been a successful model within LBI departments and is being rolled out now to contractors and external employers. See Appendix C for full details

c) Promotion of a personalised approach to support for unemployed residents

- 4.8 The formation of the Learning Skills and Employment services has gone some way to ensuring wider access to employment support for residents across the borough. ACL delivers in numerous community locations across the borough. Wherever residents access the Learning, Skills and Employment service they are offered personalised support and gain access to the wider team. ACL learners are frequently individuals with multiple barriers and issues. In the last 2 years surveys of ACL learners have shown that over 100 learners have progressed from ACL courses into paid employment.
- 4.9 A new Wellbeing and Work Partnership has been established which is piloting new approaches to engaging unemployed residents, with input from NHS, DWP and Council services. The *Working Better* pilot based employment coaches in GP surgeries and the *Single Point of Access* project have encouraged health professionals to refer patients to iWork for triage, who then identify the most suitable local employment service. As a result for the first time the council has exceeded the corporate target for disabled people supported into employment, with 117 being reported against a target of 100 in the first two quarters of 2016/7.
- 4.10 The Strategic Employment Partnership was established in June 2015 and created a forum for key local stakeholders engaged in employment support and community involvement. This partnership has overseen the establishment of a borough wide network of Employment practitioners (the EPN) which brings together 80 local agencies to discuss good practice and disseminate news, and has also supported the establishment of the Employment clusters.
- 4.11 Employment Clusters have been established in 3 locations across the borough, attended in each case by 10- 15 local organisations, including councillors. At a borough-wide, strategic level Employment Clusters have had additional impact by creating a communication pathway which ensures services are publicised to small groups and communities . The clusters are proving a vehicle which develops co-operative working among small groups, fosters closer relationships between Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations and Islington Council, in particular Adult and Community learning and iWork, and improves the quality of employment support by providing a space where communities can give feedback on a service and thereby influence future delivery. Future clusters are planned in the coming year.
- 4.12 The Employment Commission talked about radical change. The scale of worklessness in Islington

suggests that that there is room for partners at all levels to have an impact. We know that in some cases, e.g. youth employment, solutions only work when they are 'hyper local'. The EPN and Employment Clusters offer an opportunity to extend that commitment to grassroots, neighbourhood level and have the potential to make a significant contribution to reducing poverty, and improving residents' lives.

5. Progress against scrutiny recommendations

5.1 Appendix C provides an update on progress against the twelve recommendations put forward . Committee. Most are ongoing as they relate to service delivery and an ongoing offer to Islington residents.

6. Implications

6.

6.1 Financial implications:

The report on the progress on the recommendations does not have any financial implications.

6.2 Legal Implications:

The report on the progress on the recommendations does not have any specific legal implications.

6.3 Environmental Implications:

The report on the progress on the recommendations does not have any specific legal implications

6.4 Resident Impact Assessment:

A resident impact assessment has been completed. The service continues to use its data to ensure that services are addressing residents most impacted by unemployment. Currently those with long term conditions and disabilities are over represented in the claimant count and initiatives are focusing on offers to these groups, but there is also a focus on sectors with underrepresentation from certain communities for example women and STEM

7. Conclusion

The reorganisation which dissolved the BEST team and aligned employer engagement work more closely with service delivery to adults and young people, has proved effective in creating a personalised system of employment support. This offers the council a foundation on which to build, and as new funding streams and services come into the borough, they are able to quickly connect with local communities and key stakeholders to ensure that services are well coordinated and tailored to individual need. The recent restructure which has sited Learning Skills and Employment in Childrens services, offers further opportunities to improve coordination and extend the services reach to families, young people and communities.

Appendices

Appendix A: The Committee's Report and Recommendations

Appendix B: The response to recommendations

Appendix C: Update on Progress

Appendix D: The Islington Offer

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Director for Joint Board/Committees or Exec
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