

Report of: Leader of the Council

Meeting: Executive	Date: 10 March 2016	Ward(s)	
		All	
Delete as appropriate		Non-exempt	

**Subject: Response to the report of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee in relation to the BEST Team**

**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. This paper sets out the Executive's response.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 To agree the responses to the Scrutiny Review as set out in section 4 of this report and note progress to date.
- 2.2 To agree that officers report back on progress to the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee in one year's time.

### 3 Background

- 3.1 The aim of the review was to examine concerns about the service offered by the BEST team and to ensure that the new Islington Learning, Skills and Employment service improved the offer to residents.
- 3.2 A report was prepared for the Scrutiny Review Committee in March 2015 providing data, equalities impact and key areas of work delivered by BEST.
- 3.3 In addition, a number of presentations were received by the committee from:
  - Two witnesses who had been assisted by the BEST team.
  - Two council officers – Lela Kogbara (Assistant Chief Executive, Strategy and Partnerships and Nicky Freeling, Business Engagement and Employment Support Manager)
  - Two local community based partners who use the services to support their clients (Ken Kanu, Help on Your Doorstep and Sheri Lawal, Choices)
- 3.4 The conclusion of the scrutiny review and its full list of recommendations are attached as appendix 1. 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 Response to the Recommendations

- 4.1 Recommendation 1. *That the Council's apprenticeship programme is revised to improve the offer to young people and to include 2 year offers to 16 year olds.*

A new Youth Employment Team (YET) has been established which is developing a gold standard quality framework for all apprenticeships in Islington. In addition, YET is piloting a traineeship programme that leads into apprenticeships, which will create a 2 year offer for 16 year old school leavers. The YET is working closely with Children's Services to promote apprenticeships in schools.

- 4.2 Recommendation 2. *That all Council apprenticeship opportunities are designed to offer a real pathway into sustainable employment.*

The YET is encouraging more line managers to look at higher level apprenticeships at level 3 and 4 and is working with line managers to ensure that job descriptions offer the opportunity to gain a wide breadth of experience. This provides young people with a variety of entry points. The YET are working across services to synchronise more apprenticeship opportunities within the academic year to make them more “youth friendly” and a stronger component of the vocational offer to young people.

- 4.3 Recommendation 3. *That the new youth employment team works with local employers using the Council’s apprenticeship programme as a model of good practice.*

This is the second phase of the YET gold standard framework roll out. Some local employers have already started to align their recruitment with the academic timetable and make their processes more youth friendly.

- 4.4 Recommendation 4. *That a campaign targets local employers to offer part time employment opportunities -‘Saturday’ jobs- for young people from the age of 14 upwards, to enable them to gain the work ethic, receive earnings and learn soft skills. This campaign should also target groups of young people most at risk of becoming NEET or engaging in illegal earnings.*

Reaction from employers to the launch of the Saturday Jobs Campaign has been overwhelmingly positive. The project is at a pilot phase, with 11 jobs secured to date since December 2015 and with an initial focus on the Pupil Referral Unit, Alternative Provision, and a few selected schools.

- 4.5 Recommendation 5: *That a work experience programme known as GET SET FOR WORK (GSFW) is developed for residents to gain skills and confidence, with a view to developing these residents ability to move into sustained employment.*

The GET SET FOR WORK Programme ran internally during 2015 and is continuing. Targeted clients are unemployed adults who have been out of work for over a year or who have a disability. Placements are based on meaningful roles in areas of high recruitment or difficult to recruit to roles, and there are targets set for progression post placement.

- 4.6 Recommendation 6: *As the council’s programme develops, council officers should promote the scheme with local businesses to encourage similar work experience schemes with other large employers.*

Now that the GSFW methodology has been established, all employer engagement officers are being trained to offer the scheme and information for employers has been prepared. Targets have been set for the next financial year 2016/7.

- 4.7 *Recommendation 7: Council contractors should also be strongly encouraged to offer these opportunities, together with local VCS organisations, in receipt of council funding.*

Opportunities will be developed in the course of 2016. The service will work closely with council procurement services to encourage employment of apprentices and include the offering of apprenticeships when evaluating tenders and quotes against social value criteria.

- 4.8 *This offer should reach those who need it, and the service should establish a network of employment practitioners and key strategic partners, to ensure that good practice is shared and that there is equal access of services to residents wherever they live. The VCS hubs will be encouraged to involve and support smaller groups in their areas, forming employment clusters.*

A cross borough network of employment practitioners (EPN) has been established, with an agreed programme of workforce development and quality assessment. An employment cluster has been launched in EC1 and new partnerships in Archway and Finsbury Park are underway.

- 4.9 *Recommendation 9: Focus groups should be organised to ensure residents are able to feedback about services offered.*

Focus groups are being organised twice a year; - the next groups will be February 2016.

- 4.10 *Recommendation 10: Councillors should act as 'mystery shoppers' and champions of employment services, assessing the quality of provision at the point of entry. This will assist in maintaining and monitoring quality.*

There will be a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the employment programme which will be shared with members of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee. This will include a watching brief on the impact of work on residents with long term health conditions and disabilities.

- 4.11 *Recommendation 11: Officers should monitor the take up of services using efficient data capture systems, and share information with partners to ensure that rigorous evaluation and analysis of services and the impact can be assessed.*

The current Management Information system is currently being upgraded and the Employment Intelligence Manager is developing data sharing protocols with key partners to ensure accurate impact assessment through the Strategic Employment Partnership.

- 4.12 *Recommendation 12: A strong communications strategy to be developed, working in conjunction with the council's communications team and ward partnerships, to ensure*

*that good case studies and information are disseminated, which will help to influence job seekers and encourage employers to follow good practice.*

A communications plan has been developed to deliver this and some early activity has included an iWork bus shelter campaign during December and a number of case studies and articles in Islington Life. There will be further roll out in the coming year. We will ensure that key achievements of the service and the impact on child poverty and health outcomes are captured and reported.

## **5 Implications**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

Proposals are cognisant of likely future resources and will keep within the constraints and opportunities offered.

### **5.2 Legal Implications**

Any potential future interventions outlined in this paper, in particular those pertaining to design of apprenticeships or creation of unpaid work experience or data sharing will require compliance with relevant legislation. Consultation with Legal Services has been carried out as part of the development of the proposed interventions.

### **5.3 Resident Impact Assessment**

*The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010).*

*The Council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The Council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.*

The data submitted to the scrutiny committee in March 2015 showed that the BEST team had strengths in supporting young people aged 16- 24 and those from BAME communities. However figures relating to those with disabilities, the longer term unemployed (1 year +) and lone parents, showed that the service was less effective in meeting the needs of these groups.

A Resident Impact Assessment (RIA) was carried out in January 2016. *Please see attached at appendix 2.* The RIA suggests that the equalities impact of the proposal will be most significant in relation to young residents aged 16- 24, residents aged 45 and older, lone parents and on people from BAME communities. The new service is having a significantly greater impact on the long term unemployed, and on lone parents, than the BEST service did. This is demonstrated in data captured and scrutinised and is part of a stronger performance management framework of the new service.

However, there remains an equalities risk in relation to residents living with long term health conditions and disabilities. Currently only 8 percent of clients are defining themselves as disabled. We are aware that residents living with a chronic health condition may not perceive this to be an actual disability.

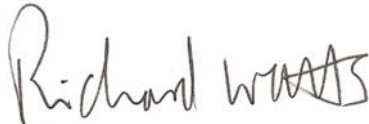
To resolve this, we are revising the registration form used to capture client data and this should be complete by March 2016, so that data for the financial year 2016/17 is more reliable.

The RIA shows that a number of clients are vulnerable in terms of age or disability, and that safeguarding might apply. The service has strong safeguarding policies in place to address any potential safeguarding risks.

No potential Human Rights breaches have been identified.

Final report clearance:

Signed by:



Leader of the Council

Date:

1 March 2016

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