

# **Post-16 Education, Employment and Training**

## **REPORT OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Post-16 Education, Employment and Training

#### Aims:

- To explore how to sustain improvements and continue to increase the number of young people progressing to, and in, post 16 education, employment and training; and
- To suggest ways to prevent young people becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the first place.

#### Evidence:

The review ran from July 2016 until March 2017. Evidence was received from a variety of sources:

#### 1. Presentations from council officers

- Holly Toft, Head of Post-16
- Alison Bennett, Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Specialist
- Cherrylynn Jaffier, Progress Advisor (Vocational Pathways)
- Lorraine Blyth, Post-16 Participation Manager
- Hamish Mackay, Young Employment and Apprenticeships Manager
- Jodi Pilling, Learning and Skills Manager

#### 2. Documentary evidence

- Department for Education, 'Participation of young people in education, employment or training – Statutory guidance for local authorities', September 2014
- Department for Education, 'Careers guidance and inspiration in schools – Statutory guidance for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff', March 2015
- London Councils, 'London Ambitions: shaping a successful careers offer for all young Londoners', June 2015
- The Islington Employment Commission, 'Working Better, The final report of the Islington Employment Commission – Summary', November 2014
- Islington Employment Services Board, 'One Year On: Making it Work Better', November 2015
- Envoy Partnership, 'A Social Return on Investment, Evaluation of the ESF NEET Fast Forward Programme', February 2015
- Contextual report
- Briefing note: Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Islington's Secondary Schools – legal and policy context, brief history of responsibility for IAG, description of Careers Network, 'Gold Standard' for New River College and AP
- Briefing note: Employability skills support for young people
- Briefing note: The role of the Progress Advisor (Vocational Pathways)
- Briefing note: Islington Schools/College Careers Cluster

#### 3. Information from witnesses

- Paul McIntyre, Assistant Head, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School
- Lesley Thain, Head of Employer Engagement, Central Foundation Boys' School
- Mercedes and Alex, Mer-IT
- David Williams, NEET Achievement Coach Manager, Groundwork London
- Dorcas Morgan, Development Director, Park Theatre
- John Nugent, Chief Executive, Green and Fortune

#### 4. Scrutiny visit

- Visit to Lift Youth Hub to meet young people who had recently been NEET and their Progress Advisors

## **Main Findings**

- The Committee commended the Progress and iWork services for their work in reducing the number of young people NEET in Islington. However, the Committee considered that improvements could be made to these services. In particular, it was queried if the services could be strengthened by presenting themselves as a united service. It is considered that greater coordination and joint working between the teams would lead to a more coherent employability and progression support service.
- The Committee has made several recommendations to further increase progression into education, employment and training. These include: increasing the number of 'stepping stone' approaches; reviewing careers education in alternative provision with a view to incorporating employer-led learning; reviewing the quality, range and accessibility of vocational pathways; and raising awareness of the council's progression and employment services.
- To significantly increase the number of young people progressing into education, employment and training, work is needed to tackle the root causes of barriers to progression.
- The Committee was impressed with the evidence received from the London Borough of Hackney on their wrap-around support for young people. Although it was noted that Hackney organises their youth services differently, the Committee was impressed that employability support was integrated with the borough's early help service. This allowed employability and progression support to be provided alongside mental health and behavioural support in a comprehensive 'whole child' approach. Further to this, these comprehensive early help services were linked to all universal youth services in Hackney, which both normalised accessing support services and allowed young people to seek and receive progression support in a range of settings.
- The Committee was concerned that some young people were not aware of the vocational options available to them or how to access support. It was also worrying that some young people did not discuss 'back-up plans' with school staff or their peers. The Committee believes that a supportive climate should be nurtured in which it is normal to seek vocational options, access support services, and discuss 'back-up plans'.
- The council has supplemented the careers education of some schools by integrating a specialist vocational progression advisor in those schools to work directly with pupils; this followed feedback that some schools were not confident in providing advice on vocational pathways. It is suggested that an induction session and resources be provided to careers leads, teachers, and other adults working with young people to develop their understanding of vocational pathways.
- The Committee identified that a number of projects focused on supporting young people's employability skills were time limited. The Committee would support a more strategic approach to developing and funding progression support activity, with an emphasis on sustainability.
- The Committee considers it essential that any actions arising from this review are developed in partnership with young people. It is important that young people are able to help shape the services they access, as this will ensure that services remain relevant and meet their needs.

## **Conclusions**

The Committee welcomes the work of the council's employment and progression support services. Services have reduced the number of young people NEET and are well received by young people. A range of support is provided to schools, and it is hoped that innovative work to develop employer-

led careers education will be effective. However, the Committee has identified areas for further development, and 16 recommendations have been made in response to the evidence received.

In carrying out the review, the Committee met with young people, officers, school leaders, officers of a neighbouring authority, representatives of local businesses and others to gain a balanced view. The Committee would like to thank the witnesses that gave evidence in relation to the scrutiny. The Executive is asked to endorse the Committee's recommendations.

## **Recommendations**

1. That the Progress and iWork teams be integrated further to develop a more coherent and efficient employment and progression support service.
2. That Children's Services review how the council's employment and progression support services could be further integrated with both targeted and universal youth services, to improve the accessibility of the Progress Team and to provide more holistic support to those in need. This review should be completed by July 2018 and the conclusions reported back to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.
3. That the council provide an induction session and supporting resources for teachers and others working with young people. This should be primarily targeted at those working with 14 – 18 year olds and professionals with careers/pastoral responsibilities. The induction and resources should focus on the specific issues faced by young people in Islington and seek to bridge knowledge gaps, such as the range of vocational opportunities available and how best to support young people into them.
4. That the council work to increase the sustainability of employability and progression support activities; for example by supporting schools in developing their own high-quality support to those seeking vocational pathways, and by reviewing how voluntary and community sector groups which contribute to young people's employability are supported.
5. That the council provide tailored advice and support to families whose benefits eligibility may be affected by their child's employment. This must be handled sensitively and should not discourage young people from seeking employment.
6. That the council explore how a greater number and range of traineeship opportunities can be provided and brokered to develop the skills of young people who are not yet ready to apply for an apprenticeship.
7. Secondary schools and colleges should make use of alumni groups to support their careers education offer. This should help young people to access professional networks and sector specific knowledge, and may identify role models for young people.
8. That the 'gold standard' for careers education in Alternative Provision and New River College be reviewed and developed further. This should include high-impact employer-led sessions focusing on ambitions and work readiness. It would be appropriate for these to be provided by local businesses which offer apprenticeships.
9. That Children's Services undertake a strategic review of the quality, range and accessibility of vocational pathways to determine if there are appropriate pathways available to young people. The findings of this review should be completed by July 2018 and the conclusions reported to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

10. That the profile of the council's progression and employment services be raised with school leaders to ensure that the council has access to data on the pupils who may not attain the required grades, and those who have not attained their expected grades on results day. This should include the pupil's name, contact details, expected and actual grades, information on their ambitions, and any other relevant information. This will ensure that young people NEET receive appropriate support as soon as possible.
11. That further work be undertaken to raise awareness of the council's progression and employment services to young people and the wider public. This should include assemblies or workshops, as well as follow up advertising in public spaces, publications such as 'Islington Life', social media, and relevant publications produced by partner organisations.
12. That further work be carried out to publicise the successes of those who have completed apprenticeships. This should raise the profile of apprenticeships and provide role models to young people.
13. That a single access route to the employability support services offered by the council and its partner organisations be established and publicised.
14. That the council continue to develop cross-London working relationships to share best practice with other boroughs. This should support Islington pupils in accessing a wide range of opportunities and developing sector-specific knowledge of the opportunities available.
15. Each secondary school and college should nominate one of their governors to oversee their careers education offer. The council should engage with those governors to support them in this role. This could include providing them with information, such as destinations data for their former pupils, including those who were referred to alternative provision.
16. Actions arising as a result of this review should be developed in partnership with young people to ensure that the council's employment and progression support services meet their needs effectively.

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2016/17

### **Councillors:**

Councillor Theresa Debono (Chair)  
Councillor Rakia Ismail (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Alex Diner  
Councillor Satnam Gill OBE  
Councillor Michelline Safi Ngongo  
Councillor Nick Ward  
Councillor Nick Wayne

### **Co-opted Members:**

Erol Baduna – Primary Parent Governor Representative  
Mary Clement – Roman Catholic Diocese  
James Stephenson – Secondary Parent Governor Representative

### **Substitutes:**

Councillor Alice Donovan  
Councillor Alice Perry  
Councillor Angela Picknell  
Councillor Dave Poyser

### **Acknowledgements:**

*The Committee would like to thank all the witnesses who gave evidence to the review.*

### **Officer Support:**

*Tania Townsend – Development and Strategy Manager  
Holly Toft – Head of Play, Youth and Post-16  
Jonathan Moore – Senior Democratic Services Officer*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Committee commenced the review in July 2016 with the overall aims of exploring how to sustain improvements and continue to increase the number of young people progressing to, and in, post 16 education, employment and training; and to suggest ways to prevent young people becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the first place.

The Committee also agreed to the following objectives:

- To understand the profile of 16-18 and 18-24 year olds in Islington currently progressing to and in education, employment and training; and which groups of young people are most vulnerable to being NEET
  - To assess the strategic role of Islington Council in helping to increase the number of young people in EET
  - To understand the obstacles to progression into EET
  - To identify and assess specific measures which will increase the progression into EET for groups of young people with low levels of participation in EET and other young people vulnerable to becoming NEET
  - To assess the availability and effectiveness of information, advice, guidance and employability skills support for young people regarding post 16 education, employment and training
  - To examine 'promising practice' approaches at school and local authority level that indicate the best success in reducing the number of young people NEET and preventing young people becoming NEET, and how they might apply locally.
- 1.2 In carrying out the review the Committee met with several officers from Children's Services, including those who work directly with young people; young people who had accessed the council's Progress service; representatives of local schools and businesses; local charitable and voluntary organisations which support young people's employability; and officers from neighbouring boroughs. The Committee also visited the Lift Youth Hub.

### Local context

- 1.3 Islington Council's Corporate Plan states that a priority of the council is to help people find the right job. The Corporate Plan explains that the council will create change for the next generation by:
- Providing one to one support to those not in education, employment or training (NEETs) or those at risk of becoming NEET;
  - Working with schools, employers and Further Education colleges to develop and promote take up of apprenticeships and vocational training – including 200 council apprenticeships over the next four years;
  - Supporting schools to deliver good quality careers advice and guidance and provide young people with the employability skills that employers require – and a new network for careers leads in schools.

1.4 The rate of young people who are NEET in Islington has greatly reduced in recent years. Islington's NEET population was 8.8% in 2012/13<sup>1</sup>, higher than the London and England averages. However, significant improvements have been achieved since then, with the number of NEETS reducing to a low of 2.2% in 2015/16<sup>2</sup>; below the London and England averages. Whilst these improvements are welcomed, a small number of young people remain NEET. These young people are typically vulnerable and have a range of different needs, which act as barriers to accessing education, employment and training. They may have significant skills gaps, behavioural difficulties, or complicated home lives. They may have mental health problems, be known to the criminal justice system, or be from a workless household. It is essential that these young people are supported in progressing to education, employment and training; spending time NEET is detrimental to individual wellbeing and increases the demands on public services. The Committee wished to review post-16 education, employment and training to establish how this cohort of vulnerable young people could be best supported, and to review how careers education, information, advice and guidance could be developed further for all young people in the borough.

## 2. Findings

### Who are young people NEET?

- 2.1 To review the how young people can be best supported it is important to understand young people NEET and the barriers they face. The Committee received a range of evidence on Islington's NEET cohort, including demographic information, information on their vulnerabilities, and case studies. It is important to consider that the NEET cohort is not static; demographic data and the particular issues faced by young people NEET constantly changes as they either progress into education, employment or training or become newly NEET. For this reason the Committee focused their evaluation around a representative snapshot of the 99 young people (aged 16-18) NEET in December 2015. This found that the NEET cohort was disproportionately male (64%), with the vast majority of those young people available to the labour market (72%). Young females were more typically not available to the labour market, with around 40% of the NEET females either a teenage parent with caring responsibilities or pregnant. Around 60% of the young people NEET were from White ethnic backgrounds. Only 6% had previously had a statement of special educational need, suggesting that this was not a significant barrier to progression in the majority of cases.
- 2.2 The fact that this NEET cohort was disproportionately comprised of White ethnic boys is worrying. White British pupils are most likely to be referred to Alternative Provision, and also experience a gap in attainment compared to other ethnic groups. This is reflected in the figures; 45% of young people NEET had previously attended either New River College or Alternative Provision.
- 2.3 Only around a quarter of the young people NEET had attended mainstream Islington schools. A similar proportion had attended schools outside of the borough. Although it is important to work with Islington schools to support young people's progression, this is not a catch-all solution. The Committee acknowledged that work to support young people's progression must take place across a range of settings.
- 2.4 The majority (59%) of the young people NEET had cycled in and out of education, employment and training. Although some young people may be NEET for extended periods of time, others may be NEET for only a matter of weeks before starting a new job or training course, however may become NEET again at a later date. This highlights that young people not only need support in accessing education, employment and training, but in remaining there.

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<sup>1</sup> Average, November 2012 to January 2013

<sup>2</sup> Average, November 2015 to January 2016

- 2.5 It is important to remember that the vast majority of young people in Islington progress into further education, employment or training successfully. However, the small number of young people that do not progress successfully tend to face significant barriers to progression. The Committee heard a great deal of evidence on the support services and opportunities available to young people NEET. The council's work in providing and coordinating these is welcomed and recommendations on how these could be developed further are set out in this report. However, to significantly increase the number of young people progressing into education, employment and training, and to improve the outcomes for these young people, work is needed to tackle the root causes of these barriers to progression.
- 2.6 The Committee acknowledges that work is underway across the council to address the issues faced by the borough's most vulnerable young people. The Committee has previously considered and commended the council's early help services which provide support to families and seek to intervene before issues become entrenched. The Committee has also previously reviewed the use of Alternative Provision, and has made recommendations to both improve its quality and minimise its use. The Committee supports the council's early intervention approach; and hopes that the recently established Fair Futures Commission can highlight the inequalities faced by the most deprived young people in the borough and will lead to more positive outcomes for these young people.

#### The strategic role of Islington Council in providing support to young people

- 2.7 Islington Council has an essential role in supporting the progression of young people. There are several strands to the council's work in supporting progression, however this work can be grouped under three broad categories; work to directly support young people; work to support schools; and the council's role as a major employer in the local area.
- 2.8 Islington Council has various statutory responsibilities related to the progression of young people. The council must ensure that young people remain 'in learning' (i.e. in education, employment or training) up to the age of 18. This requirement is extended up to age 25 where young people have special educational needs or disabilities. The council must also ensure that there is suitable education and training provision in their local area, promote the participation in education or training of all 16 and 17 year olds, and collect and record information on young people's current activities to ensure that those aged 16 to 19 who are not participating are identified and offered support to re-engage. These statutory responsibilities are met through two teams in the Children's Services directorate; the Progress Team, which supports 16-19 year olds, and the iWork Team, which supports a number of employment initiatives for those aged up to 25.
- 2.9 The Progress Team employs qualified careers advisors who provide direct support to young people; this includes young people NEET, those at risk of becoming NEET, and those in employment, education or training who were recently NEET. Progress Advisors work with young people to implement the 'Progress Pledge', this includes intensive 1-to-1 support and group work focused on developing employability skills, awareness of the opportunities available to young people, CV and interview preparation, access to volunteering and work experience opportunities, and independent and impartial guidance; this may involve signposting to other support services. The service also incorporates elements of coaching and mentoring; advisors are solution-based and look positively at what young people could do, as opposed to focusing on barriers. Young people may develop strong working relationships with their advisors and can contact them by text, email or social media. Advisors may also visit their home if they are reluctant to engage. The evidence received from young people engaging with the Progress Team was very positive; young people commented on the determination of their advisors, with one suggesting that his advisor supported him like he would support his own child. They also noted that the advisors explained everything to the young people in a relatable way. At any one time the Progress Team is directly working with between 80 and 100 young people.

- 2.10 The Progress Team is managed by the Post-16 Participation Manager and the Head of Play, Youth and Post-16. These officers lead on providing the September Guarantee; which provides every Year 11 pupil at an Islington school and every Year 12 pupil resident in the borough with a named educational offer in September. Officers commented that this is a significant annual task which is essential in ensuring that young people progress successfully.
- 2.11 The iWork Youth Employment Team provides advice and support to people aged 18 to 25, including 1-to-1 support for young people aged 18 to 25 who wish to secure an apprenticeship. The team also works with local employers to broker apprenticeship and employment opportunities; this includes hosting networking events which introduce young jobseekers to local employers, and developing bespoke opportunities suitable to the specific needs of vulnerable young adults. The service works with local schools, colleges and alternative provision providers to develop careers education programmes, and provides events in schools such as assemblies, taster sessions and careers fairs. The iWork Team also delivers one-off projects to support the employability of young people; for example a Youth Engagement Pilot was trialled in 2016 which involved recruiting young people to engage with other young people NEET to advertise opportunities and encourage engagement; 48 young people engaged, with 10 moving into employment and 11 moving into education.
- 2.12 The Committee noted that the performance of the Progress and iWork services was meeting corporate targets. Data from September 2016 indicated that the council was on track to meet its target of supporting 300 18 to 25 year olds into paid employment in 2016/17. Data from November 2016 indicated that 66 16 to 25 year olds had been supported into an apprenticeship in 2016/17; making a significant contribution towards the target of supporting 100 people of all ages into apprenticeships each year.
- 2.13 The Committee did raise some concern that there was insufficient information on the reach and effectiveness of these services, however acknowledged the difficulties of collecting data on unemployment and the destinations of young people. A great deal of information is available on young people aged 16 to 18 as colleges are required to advise the council when young person drops out of their course. However, there is no mechanism for the council to monitor how many 18 to 25 year olds are NEET, and as a result officers do not know what proportion of unemployed 18 to 25 year olds are accessing the council's iWork service. Officers explained that data on the number of JSA claimants was available from JobCentrePlus, however this was not an accurate measure of unemployment as it was known that many unemployed people, particularly young people, did not claim out of work benefits. The council did regularly monitor the progress of young people it had supported and attempted to make contact with them after 13, 26 and 52 weeks, however as time went on this became increasingly difficult as they may move house, change phone number, or simply feel that they no longer need to engage with employment support services.
- 2.14 The Committee commended the Progress and iWork services for their work in reducing the number of young people NEET in Islington. However, the Committee considered that improvements could be made to these services. In particular, it was queried if the services could be strengthened by presenting themselves as a united service. Although the Committee recognises the different roles of the two teams, both Progress and iWork both sit within the Children's Services directorate and have similar goals. It is considered that greater coordination and joint working between the teams would lead to a more coherent employability and progression support service. Presenting as a single service would help in promoting clear messages around the council's employment and progression support offer. This would help to raise the profile of the services among young people, parents, schools and employers. Further joint working would also ease transitions between services, and may lead to a more efficient use of resources.

- 2.15 **It is recommended that the Progress and iWork teams be integrated further to develop a more coherent and efficient employment and progression support service.**
- 2.16 The Committee also considered how accessible the council's employment and progression support services are to young people. Although the feedback from young people on the Progress service was very positive, it was also commented that most young people did not know about the services available, and those that were accessing the service had wished they had known about it earlier. Suggestions for improving the promotion of the council's employability and progression support services are set out in detail elsewhere in this report; however the Committee also thought that the accessibility of employment support services could be improved by reviewing how they are aligned with other children's services.
- 2.17 The Committee agreed that supporting the progression and development of young people should be the responsibility of all agencies that come into contact with young people. Work to support post-16 progression should start from an early age and across a range of settings. The Committee was particularly impressed with the evidence received from the London Borough of Hackney on their wrap-around support for young people. Although it was noted that Hackney organises their youth services differently, the Committee was impressed that employability support was integrated with the borough's early help service. This allowed employability and progression support to be provided alongside mental health and behavioural support in a comprehensive 'whole child' approach. Further to this, these comprehensive early help services were linked to all universal youth services in Hackney, which both normalised accessing support services and allowed young people to seek and receive progression support in a range of settings. Reviewing how progression support services are aligned with other services accessed by young people would help to ensure that progression support is accessible and delivered alongside other interventions where appropriate.
- 2.18 **It is recommended that Children's Services review how the council's employment and progression support services could be further integrated with both targeted and universal youth services, to improve the accessibility of the Progress Team and to provide more holistic support to those in need. This review should be completed by July 2018 and the conclusions reported back to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.**

The strategic role of Islington Council in providing support to schools

- 2.19 The Committee considered how the council engages with schools and supports their role in providing careers education. Local authorities are required to work with schools to identify those who are in need of targeted support or who are at risk of not participating. The council also provides training sessions, networking sessions and resources such as an online portal for careers leads and tutors across the borough; this supports the professional development of staff and promotes the sharing of best practice.
- 2.20 The Committee welcomed that the council had been responsive to the needs of schools by providing expertise on careers matters. This included working with schools to develop the quality of their careers education, information, advice and guidance programmes; officers reported that some schools did not have a detailed understanding of statutory duties and guidance and were unaware of best practice and Ofsted expectations, in such instances the council worked with schools to make improvements in this area. The council had also supplemented the careers education of some schools by integrating a specialist vocational progression advisor in those schools to work directly with pupils. This followed feedback from schools that they were not as confident in providing advice on vocational pathways. The Committee noted that all such work between the council and schools was voluntary; schools are ultimately responsible for how their careers education is provided and may choose not to take advantage of the support offered by the council.

- 2.21 The Committee welcomes the work of the council's vocational progression advisor and considers that further work is need to raise awareness among young people, parents, schools, and others of how to access vocational opportunities and apprenticeships. If schools are not confident in providing support to pupils seeking vocational pathways, then the council should consider developing an induction session and resources to support careers leads, teachers, and other adults working with young people to develop their understanding and confidence. This would be a more sustainable way of providing support on vocational pathways in the longer term, and would also ensure that pupils receive consistent messages from the key adults they interact with. An induction session could not only focus on vocational pathways, but the key issues faced by young people in Islington, including trends in attainment and progression, the borough's early intervention approach, the services and opportunities available to young people, and any findings and relevant actions arising from the Fair Futures Commission.
- 2.22 **It is recommended that the council provide an induction session and supporting resources for teachers and others working with young people. This should be primarily targeted at those working with 14 – 18 year olds and professionals with careers/pastoral responsibilities. The induction and resources should focus on the specific issues faced by young people in Islington and seek to bridge knowledge gaps, such as the range of vocational opportunities available and how best to support young people into them.**
- 2.23 The Committee also noted that the council was providing support to schools through the Careers Clusters pilot. 'Careers Clusters' are intended to support schools in developing employer-led careers education. This work is funded by the European Social Investment Fund and the Skills Funding Agency and delivered in partnership with Westminster Kingsway City and Islington College. 700 pupils across nine schools and one college are benefitting from the programme, which supports 21 local employers in carrying out sustained engagement with schools. Employer activity must take place for at least 26 weeks and is focused on both directly supporting pupils and developing the knowledge of teachers. The council is working to facilitate the pilot by working with both schools and employers to develop relationships and integrate employer-led careers education into the curriculum successfully. The pilot will be evaluated through contractual performance measures, which include increases in the number of people entering college, university, or apprenticeships. The Committee welcomed this work, and recognised that it was an innovative way of providing careers education.
- 2.24 The Committee identified that a number of projects focused on supporting young people's employability skills were time limited; the 'Careers Cluster' is a short term pilot which is externally funded; the specialist vocational pathways advisor is employed on a fixed term contract. The evidence received from charitable and voluntary sector organisations highlighted that the sector does work to develop the skills and support the progression of young people, however some groups lacked funding and support which would enable them to fully develop the services they offer. The Committee considered that longer term and more sustainable solutions are required. The Committee would support a more strategic approach to developing and funding progression support activity, with an emphasis on sustainability. This could include promoting CPD for careers leads to enable schools to provide high-quality advice on vocational pathways, and reviewing how support is provided to voluntary and community sector groups which demonstrate that they contribute to the employability of young people.
- 2.25 **It is recommended that the council work to increase the sustainability of employability and progression support activities; for example by supporting schools in developing their own high-quality support to those seeking vocational pathways, and by reviewing how voluntary and community sector groups which contribute to young people's employability are supported.**

### The strategic role of Islington Council as an employer

- 2.26 As a major employer in the local area, the council is also able to positively influence the local jobs market by creating high quality opportunities that provide training and progression opportunities. The council has committed to offering 200 apprenticeships between 2014-18, and whilst apprenticeships are open to all ages, recruitment is targeted at 16-24 year olds. This has had a positive impact on the employment of young people; 90% of the apprentices recruited by the council in 2015-16 were aged 16-24. Those on apprenticeships are supported in applying for full time positions in the council after their apprenticeship ends. Apprenticeships are available in a wide range of roles, including business administration, customer service, play work, facilities services, plumbing, electrical installations, painting and decorating, and ICT. The council is also able to influence the employment practices of its contractors, for example by contractually requiring them to recruit a set number of local apprentices.
- 2.27 The Committee considered the outcomes of the council's apprentices. Of the 79 apprentices recruited by the council between April 2014 and March 2016, 62 had left their roles. 30 of these had taken up permanent employment in the council. A further 9 were employed elsewhere and 2 were in education. The council was out of contact with around a quarter of those who had left, although work was underway to re-connect with these individuals and provide support if required.
- 2.28 Officers advised that the council's apprenticeship programme was in the process of being developed further and explained some of the challenges faced by officers. The programme is supported by one iWork officer with responsibility for brokering roles, managing recruitment processes and supporting apprentices. As a result there had not been the resources to undertake significant amount of pastoral care and follow up support, which officers acknowledged would help to improve the apprenticeship programme. However, it was noted that the council had recently appointed an Apprenticeship Manager in Human Resources who would take on responsibility for liaising with management and identifying roles for apprentices. This was expected to provide the iWork officer with more time to offer support to apprentices, which would increase the successful progression rate of apprentices.
- 2.29 The Committee commended the council's work in providing apprenticeship opportunities to young people and welcomed that further resources had been allocated to support the apprenticeship programme. It was considered that some improvements could be made to how opportunities are created and targeted, however this is considered elsewhere in this report.

### Obstacles to progression into education, employment or training

- 2.30 The Committee received a great deal of evidence on the obstacles that young people face in progressing into education, employment and training. Evidence was received on this point from council officers, local schools, employers, and young people themselves. As previously highlighted, young people NEET tend to be vulnerable; they may be experiencing complex personal issues, have physical or mental health problems, behavioural difficulties, or significant skills gaps.
- 2.31 Several witnesses commented that some young people were simply not prepared for the transition from school to college or employment. Although schools provided careers education, this did not lead to positive outcomes for all young people; it was reported that some young people were not ready for a greater level of independence, struggled to commit to routines, did not have a strong work ethic, lacked interpersonal skills, or were difficult to work with.
- 2.32 Central Foundation School commented on the value of young people gaining experience of employment through part-time work alongside their studies at school or college. This prepared young people for entering work by developing their employability skills, building their CV, and gave experience of managing their time and finances. However, it was suggested that suitable

opportunities for young people were increasingly rare; there was a significant amount of competition for part-time jobs in the local area, particularly for those only seeking evening or weekend work.

- 2.33 Green and Fortune, a local employer in the hospitality sector, highlighted that they provided opportunities to young people across 20 different roles. However, it was acknowledged that not all businesses were as keen to recruit young people; some businesses preferred to use a very high number of agency staff, which Green and Fortune considered unnecessary when there are so many young people looking for work.
- 2.34 Although Islington Council had recently increased its focus on vocational pathways and apprenticeships, it was commented that some parents and young people were sceptical of non-academic pathways, and these attitudes could be a barrier to progression. This was potentially reinforced through teaching staff; the young people interviewed felt that schools had a narrow focus on GCSEs and academia, and reported that they were simply unaware of the range of opportunities available to them until they engaged with the Progress Team. The Committee was concerned that this focus on linear academic progression was encouraging some young people to pursue pathways which were unsuitable for them; it was reported that many young people NEET had previously been in college but had dropped out.
- 2.35 Some young people face financial barriers to participation at post-18; the Committee was concerned that young people progressing to university accrued huge amount of debt, even if they dropped out in their first year. Young people may also face financial barriers to re-engaging with education if they spend a significant amount of time NEET; young people are entitled to two-free years of post-16 education, however this entitlement generally ends on their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday unless they have a special educational need or disability. After this age young adults may have to make a financial contribution to their education, which can be prohibitive.
- 2.36 Other obstacles may be faced by particular groups of young people. Those who speak English as a second language may face additional difficulty in applying for work or college or accessing information about opportunities and support services. Evidence received from the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School indicated that some of their BME pupils lacked confidence in the workplace; however work was underway to resolve this.
- 2.37 It was highlighted that young people who were vulnerable to gang activity may not travel outside of their immediate local area as they did not feel safe; this was not only detrimental to their employment and progression prospects, but their overall wellbeing.
- 2.38 It was suggested that some pupils and their families needed advice on how employment or an apprenticeship could affect their benefits eligibility; Central Foundation School advised of instances where families had unexpectedly lost benefits income as a result of their child's employment, and one family had subsequently become homeless. The Committee thought that this was unacceptable and a more coordinated approach to working with families in this situation was needed.
- 2.39 The Committee received several powerful statements from young people on their experiences of becoming NEET. One young person identified an issue in relation to young people needing academic references; she was denied a reference by her college after requesting to take up a different course at another institution. As a result her relationship with the college deteriorated and she became NEET. She commented that the college was aware she was becoming NEET and offered her no support or advice. Officers explained that all pupils were provided with an academic reference when they left school; however it was at the discretion of colleges if they chose not to provide a reference. It was rare for a pupil to be denied a reference.

- 2.40 Another young person advised of an issue related to moving schools. Although he was predicted good GCSE grades, he was registered to sit 13 GCSEs and struggled to cope with the workload, which he described as 'overwhelming'. His relationship with the school deteriorated and he applied to attend other schools; however the schools would not admit him as it was too late in the academic year and he had been studying different syllabuses. He became NEET as a result.
- 2.41 One young person advised that she could not cope at school and was eventually excluded, leaving school with no qualifications. The young person reported that the school did not offer her any advice when she was excluded and she did not know about her options or who to contact.
- 2.42 One young person reported that he did not achieve his expected GCSE grades and as a result was not accepted onto his preferred college course. He took up a Media course as an alternative, but the course was not appropriate for him and he disengaged from education. The young person spent some months NEET before being referred to the Progress Team by his mother, via the council's Housing Service. The young person reported that his confidence and self-esteem was very low after leaving education, he said that not achieving his expected GCSE results was 'crushing' and he felt that he had let his family down and that he had nothing to show for his time at school. The young person reported that his school did have a mentor system and careers advisors, however he acknowledged that he had a difficult home life and struggled when this type of support was not continued at college. Whilst at school, the young person suspected that he may not achieve the qualifications needed to get onto his preferred course. This was raised with his mentor at the time; however his mentor would not consider a back-up plan, instead encouraging him to 'get his head down' and focus on his studies.
- 2.43 The obstacles to progression set out above are concerning. The Committee is particularly troubled that some young people either do not have the skills to progress or are not aware of the opportunities available to them; however the Committee is clear that young people are not to blame for this. It is difficult for the Committee to draw conclusions or make recommendations based on the individual experiences of young people. However, in relation to one specific point raised above, the council should consider if young people and their families need additional advice in relation to how their employment could affect their benefits eligibility, and tailored guidance should be provided if required. This must not discourage young people from progressing into employment, but should help families understand and plan for the implications of their child's employment.
- 2.44 **It is recommended that the council provide tailored advice to families whose benefits eligibility may be affected by their child's employment.**

Measures which will increase the progression into EET

- 2.45 The evidence received included a number of proposals for how to further increase progression into education, employment and training. The Committee was supportive of several of these proposals and has made recommendations for these to be adopted and actioned by council services.

(a) stepping stone approaches

- 2.46 The Committee heard about the value of 'stepping stone approaches'; more informal education and employment opportunities for young people who are NEET and not yet ready to opt for full time employment or education. Opportunities such as traineeships offer fixed-term, part-time employment and education with a low level of time commitment, and are intended to act as a bridge to apprenticeships. They also provide young people with an opportunity to gain accreditation in work related skills such as communication, time keeping, team work, and completing tasks accurately. Traineeships are available in a range of vocational areas including construction, painting and decorating, business administration, customer service, digital

marketing and social media, jewellery manufacturing, design, hospitality and general retail. They may also offer Level 1 Functional Skills qualifications in English and Maths. These opportunities are delivered by a variety of providers and start from programmes that last for as little as one week. These 'bitesize' options are important as many young people NEET initially struggle to commit to the idea of longer programmes, however many, with appropriate support, are able to build on small successes and make progress over time.

- 2.47 The Committee recognised that traineeships provided opportunities for NEET young people who may not be ready for apprenticeships or other education or employment, and considered how the council could best support such programmes. It was noted that the council had provided a traineeship programme in the Repairs team between February and April 2016 for 11 unemployed 16-24 year olds; this had resulted in two young people progressing into apprenticeships. It was suggested that brokering and directly providing a greater number and range of traineeships could assist NEET young people, particularly the most vulnerable who faced difficulty in accessing other opportunities.
- 2.48 **It is recommended that the council explore how a greater number and range of traineeship opportunities can be provided and brokered to develop the skills of young people who are not yet ready to apply for an apprenticeship.**

(b) the work of schools

- 2.49 The Committee was impressed by the evidence received from the two schools which contributed to the scrutiny review, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School and Central Foundation Boy's School. Both schools focused their careers education around making the most of the significant opportunities available to young people in London, and had developed successful long-term partnerships with local businesses to deliver high quality employer-led careers education. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson had a particularly successful partnership with the Hogan Lovells law firm which supported a mentoring programme, held school trips to their offices, provided structured opportunities for pupils to experience day-to-day work in their offices, and met with teaching staff to discuss their pupils aspirations. Central Foundation benefitted from a similar relationship with Slaughter and May.
- 2.50 Both schools had a range of business partners and commented on the importance of developing these relationships. The schools worked very closely with their business partners to carefully plan sessions for their pupils. It was commented that some organisations wanted to engage with schools but did not want to tailor their sessions to pupils' needs; however it was essential that schools seeking to develop high-quality employer-led careers education selected the right people to carry out the right sessions for their pupils. The Committee noted that the Careers Cluster pilot was seeking to develop similar relationships in a number of schools in the borough.
- 2.51 The schools recognised the importance of providing information advice and guidance to pupils from an early age. Central Foundation School provided a Year 6 summer school for future pupils, with both schools then starting careers education from Year 7. Work included focusing on aspirations and skills, awareness of different sectors, work on CVs, and mock applications processes and interviews.
- 2.52 The schools commented that the resources available for providing careers education were increasingly limited and explained low-cost approaches to supporting pupil progress. Careers education was often provided through assemblies, with former pupils sometimes addressing their pupils on different career paths. This helped to provide young people with realistic role models; Elizabeth Garrett Anderson reinforced this message by displaying the destinations of their alumni on a board in the school. Central Foundation School commented that a low-cost way to support

progression was to share data on pupil progress among all staff engaging with young people. This allowed support to be provided consistently.

- 2.53 The Committee considered that making use of alumni groups was a good method of providing young people with access to professional networks and sector specific knowledge at a relatively low-cost. It was recommended that all schools should make use of such networks to support their careers education offer. Schools should be encouraged to develop alumni networks if they do not already exist.
- 2.54 **It is recommended that secondary schools and colleges make use of alumni groups to support their careers education offer. This should help young people to access professional networks and sector specific knowledge, and may identify role models for young people.**
- 2.55 The Committee recognised that the careers education programmes of local schools varied; as a result different schools had different outcomes, however officers were confident that all schools were seeking to provide high quality careers education. Children's Services were supporting those schools which recognised that their careers education provision could be improved. Although this work is welcomed, it was highlighted that around a half of young people NEET had previously attended Alternative Provision, and as a result would not have had access to the full range of careers education provided by local schools. It was noted that the council has sought to develop a 'gold standard' of careers education for Alternative Provision and New River College pupils which provides resources to providers based around developing personal and employability skills and awareness of employers and employment practices. Whilst this work to improve the quality of careers education in Alternative Provision is commended, the Committee notes that this 'gold standard' lacks the high-impact employer led careers education which schools have access to either through their own established programmes or the Careers Cluster pilot. Evidence received from schools highlighted that this work is particularly valuable and the Committee considers that Alternative Provision and New River College pupils should also have access to high quality employer-led careers education.
- 2.56 **It is recommended that the 'gold standard' for careers education in Alternative Provision and New River College be reviewed and developed further. This should include high-impact employer-led sessions focusing on ambitions and work readiness. It would be appropriate for these to be provided by local businesses which offer apprenticeships.**

(c) cultural and creative activities

- 2.57 The Committee considered the value of cultural and creative activities and how these can contribute to young people's personal development. Evidence from schools highlighted that young people benefitted from being located in London as there were many high-quality extra-curricular activities available to them. The schools emphasised that it was very important for young people to make the most of these opportunities, which developed their skills, broadened their experiences, and helped to build their CV. The Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School suggested that participating in cultural and creative activities was as important as attaining high grades, however noted that not all parents valued these opportunities.
- 2.58 The Committee acknowledged the value of cultural and creative activities and thought that the take-up of such opportunities should be strongly encouraged. It was noted that a small number of apprenticeships were offered in creative industries, such as through Park Theatre, however interest in these opportunities was limited. Officers commented that whilst some schools were keen to identify pupils with a creative interest and promote such opportunities to them, others were not.

(d) developing the vocational offer

- 2.59 The Committee considered if the vocational pathways available in the local area were sufficient. Evidence from the Progress Advisor who specialises in vocational pathways identified that an increasing number of young people are interested in creative media, graphic design, web design and similar pathways; however relatively few opportunities were available in these fields.
- 2.60 The Committee's previous review of Alternative Provision found that some young people were being referred to Alternative Provision as a means of accessing vocational pathways. The Committee was particularly concerned by this, given that outcomes for young people in Alternative Provision were often not as good as those who remain in mainstream education.
- 2.61 The young people interviewed by committee members commented that schools put a disproportionate emphasis on GCSEs and indicated that they did not know the range of vocational pathways available or how to access them. The young people had previously thought that GCSEs were the only route to gaining employment or accessing further education. When young people became NEET, this lack of awareness of other pathways contributed to their anxieties.
- 2.62 The Committee expressed concern that there may be unmet demand for certain vocational pathways, which was resulting in young people either disengaging from education at school age, or taking up further education courses which were not suitable for them. The Committee considered that a strategic review of the quality, range and accessibility of vocational pathways would help to ascertain if there are adequate pathways available to young people and highlight any areas for further development. In particular, it was suggested that a more flexible arrangement which allowed pupils to access vocational qualifications alongside their GCSEs in school may be desirable, as this would set young people on vocational pathways earlier and help to keep young people engaged in education.
- 2.63 **It is recommended that Children's Services undertake a strategic review of the quality, range and accessibility of vocational pathways to determine if there are appropriate pathways available to young people. The findings of this review should be completed by July 2018 and the conclusions reported to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.**

(e) partnership work

- 2.64 The Committee considered that effective partnership working was essential to support young people. The Committee was encouraged by examples of young people who had been referred to the Progress Team by Social Services, Housing, their school, or others. However, it was suggested that working relationships with some schools could be developed further to ensure that young people receive the full range of support they are entitled to in the most effective way.
- 2.65 Progress Advisors and Children's Services officers were asked how support services for young people could be improved. One area highlighted was around schools engaging with the Progress Team. For example, it was commented that Progress Advisors attended some schools on results day and were able to discuss options with the pupils who did not attain their expected grades. This allowed referrals to support services to be made very quickly and pathways for pupils to be found as soon as possible. However, not all schools allowed the Progress Team to access the school and meet with their pupils on results day.
- 2.66 As an alternative, some schools provided the council with the details of pupils who did not achieve their expected grades so that a Progress Advisor could arrange a meeting or telephone call with them as soon as possible; however not all schools passed on this information. Officers

raised that this could have a significant impact on young people. Young people who did not attain their required grades were more likely to become NEET, and if schools did not pass on the details of these young people to the council, then the only way of identifying that these young people had become NEET was to cross-reference lists of pupils against college registers when they became available at the end of the Summer. The result of this was some young people could be NEET without any support for several weeks. One young person interviewed commented that, without appropriate guidance, young people NEET tended to either mope or turn to crime.

- 2.67 The Committee was concerned by the effect that being NEET for even a small amount of time could have on a young person's wellbeing. Members thought that young people should be made aware of support services at the earliest possible opportunity, and queried if referrals could be made to the Progress Team *before* young people left school, if it was thought that they may not attain their required grades. In response, officers commented that this would be very helpful, however for this to work effectively the profile of the council's progression and employment services needed to be raised at a strategic level within schools.
- 2.68 The Committee strongly supported raising the profile of these council services to school leaders to ensure that all young people NEET, or at risk of becoming NEET, are referred to support services as soon as possible.
- 2.69 **It is recommended that the profile of the council's progression and employment services be raised with school leaders to ensure that the council has access to data on the pupils who may not attain the required grades, and those who have not attained their expected grades on results day. This should include the pupil's name, contact details, expected and actual grades, information on their ambitions, and any other relevant information. This will ensure that young people NEET receive appropriate support as soon as possible.**

(f) raising awareness

- 2.70 The Committee thought that progression into education, employment or training could be supported by increasing awareness of alternative pathways and the support services available to both young people and adults. The young people interviewed commented that most of their peers had no idea that support services existed. One young person said that he spent a few months NEET as he did not know that there were any services available to support him. He commented that if he was aware of the services available he would have accessed them much earlier.
- 2.71 The young people interviewed suggested that advice should be delivered in schools and colleges on the various options if young people don't attain their expected grades. It was commented that this should be practical advice, delivered positively, and care should be taken to ensure that these young people are not branded as 'failures'. The young people identified that they and their peers did not talk about 'back-up plans' and this was never discussed in school or college. One young person reported that he was worried he would not achieve the required GCSE grades, but his school mentor refused to discuss a back-up plan with him, instead encouraging him to focus on his studies. When he did not attain the required grades, he didn't know what to do, what pathways were available to him, or how to access support.
- 2.72 The Committee considered how best to raise awareness of alternative pathways and the support services available to young people. It was thought that promotion both inside and outside of school from the start of the exams season until after results day would be most effective. This promotion should also be targeted at Alternative Provision providers and New River College. Publicity in public spaces around results day, such as estate notice boards, community buildings and bus shelters, may also generate additional referrals, as would promotion on social media, in

the local press, and in relevant publications.

- 2.73 The young people interviewed stressed the importance of stopping young people becoming NEET. They thought that their becoming NEET was entirely avoidable, and that they would have moved directly from school into another pathway had they known about the options and services available.
- 2.74 The Committee expressed concern that some young people were not aware of the vocational options available or how to access support. It was also worrying that some young people did not discuss 'back-up plans' with school staff or their peers. The Committee believes that a supportive climate should be nurtured in which it is normal to seek vocational options, access support services, and discuss 'back-up plans'. The recommendations set out in this report are intended to develop a more holistic approach to careers education in which accessing vocational pathways and support services is normalised; it is hoped that this will increase the take-up of services and improve outcomes for young people.
- 2.75 **It is recommended that further work be undertaken to raise awareness of the council's progression and employment services to young people and the wider public. This should include assemblies or workshops, as well as follow up advertising in public spaces, publications such as 'Islington Life', social media, and relevant publications produced by partner organisations.**

(g) identifying role models or 'champions'

- 2.76 The Committee also thought that identifying role models or 'champions' would help to raise awareness of vocational pathways. The Committee heard that some young people and their parents are very sceptical of apprenticeships, considering them to be inferior to traditional academic education. The Committee supports the council's work in recent years to promote apprenticeships, and thought that this could be enhanced by publicising the successes of young people who had completed apprenticeships. It is hoped that this will help to normalise vocational pathways and reassure young people and parents who may not otherwise consider an apprenticeship to be a valid option.
- 2.77 **It is recommended that further work be carried out to publicise the successes of those who have completed apprenticeships. This should raise the profile of apprenticeships and provide role models to young people.**

(h) developing a single access route to support services

- 2.78 In carrying out the review the Committee considered the range of employability support services provided by schools, the council, and the community and voluntary sector. It was noted that there are good quality services which are provided independent of the council, such as Groundwork London, which provides programmes to support young people NEET and those at risk of becoming NEET, and Young London Working, a job brokering service funded by the Mayor of London.
- 2.79 The Committee commented that it is important to view services from the perspective of young people, who may not appreciate that these services are provided by a range of different organisations. It was suggested that establishing a single access point to the employability support services offered by both the council and partner organisations would be helpful, as young people may benefit from being signposted to the services delivered by other organisations, depending on their particular needs.

- 2.80 **It is recommended that a single access route to the employability support services offered by the council and its partner organisations be established and publicised.**

'Promising practice' approaches at school and local authority level

- 2.81 This report has highlighted actions which may further increase the number of young people progressing into education, employment and training. In carrying out the review the Committee also acknowledged a range of 'promising practice' approaches which are already used at school and local authority level. These approaches are set out below; the Committee would support continued or further use of such approaches in Islington.

(a) The use of data

- 2.82 The Committee was particularly impressed by the significant reductions in the number young people NEET in recent years, and explored what factors had contributed to such an improvement. Although the level of employment was partially due to economic factors, officers suggested that service improvements had been secured by improving the accuracy of data, which allowed officers to provide a more effective and focused service. Through improved use of data officers were able to identify the young people most in need of support and provide them with targeted and relevant advice.
- 2.83 The Committee would like to see data-driven approaches used as far as possible. It was noted that the council stops routinely collecting destinations data when young people reach age 19. The Committee thought that it would be helpful if this data continued to be collected for longer, however appreciates that data collection becomes increasingly difficult after this age as young adults leave education, change their contact details, and may move out of the borough.

(b) Innovative methods

- 2.84 The Committee received evidence on a number of innovative methods which appeared to be effective in supporting young people's progression. A 'speed networking' session led by the Islington Youth Employment Network appeared to be particularly successful; one recent event was attended by 60 young people and 17 employers, and within a fortnight 14 of those young people were in employment.
- 2.85 The Committee was particularly impressed with the evidence received from Hackney Council. As set out elsewhere in this report, the organisation had re-designed their youth services, with employment support for young people integrated into their early help service, which was linked to all universal services. Hackney Council had also developed a system for identifying pupils at risk of becoming NEET, the 'Risk of NEET Index'. This evaluated various factors including attendance, KS2 performance and the number of times young people had transferred school. The system was being rolled out to all schools following a pilot, and was also being developed further to include other risk factors such as bereavement. This index helped to identify the pupils most in need of support and ensure that resources were targeted appropriately. The Committee welcomed this data-driven approach.
- 2.86 The Committee noted that the issues faced by young people in Islington were similar to those faced by young people across London, and thought that it was important to work with other boroughs to identify and implement best-practice approaches. The Committee also considered that Islington's success in reducing the number of young people NEET could contribute to learning across London. The council was already participating in cross-London work under the Greater London Authority's 'London Ambitions' programme, and would be supportive of further cross-London work and knowledge sharing to ensure that young people in Islington continue to receive the best possible services. In particular, it was suggested that other boroughs may have sector-specific knowledge and partnerships which could benefit young people in Islington.

- 2.87 **It is recommended that the council continue to develop cross-London working relationships to share best practice with other boroughs. This should support Islington pupils in accessing a wide range of opportunities and developing sector-specific knowledge of the opportunities available.**

(c) The work of schools

- 2.88 The Committee was impressed by the partnership arrangements that some schools had developed with businesses and universities. Some businesses supported mentoring programmes in schools, provided guest speakers at assemblies, hosted school-trips to their offices, or provided work experience activities. These activities are set out in detail elsewhere in this report.

(d) the employer's perspective

- 2.89 The employers which provided evidence to the review highlighted activities which they considered to be particularly worthwhile. Green and Fortune commented that council initiatives such as the Saturday Jobs Scheme had been a great success and thought that providing young people with five or six hours of employment a week was the best way to develop employability skills and experience. The company had employed two young people through the scheme, both of which had since been promoted, and as a result the company had recently employed two more young people.
- 2.90 Green and Fortune had developed employment programmes in partnership with the council, JobCentre Plus, and Global Generation, a local charity. Park Theatre also offered apprenticeships and had strong relationships with the council, JobCentre Plus, and local schools and colleges. The Committee was pleased that mutually beneficial working relationships had been developed with a range of local employers, and hoped that these relationships would develop further through activities such as the Careers Cluster pilot.

Other findings

(a) the voluntary sector

- 2.91 The Committee considered how smaller community organisations contribute to the development of young people. Evidence was received from Mer-IT, an organisation which provides free ICT training to young people and other computer-based opportunities. A number of organisations were passionate about working with young people, and it was suggested that coordination with the council's community and voluntary sector development officers could ensure that these organisations are supported and lead to a more joined-up approach in the voluntary sector.

(b) the role of school governors

- 2.92 The London Ambitions programme supported by London Councils, the London Enterprise Panel and the Mayor of London recommends that 'Every good institution will have a governor with oversight for ensuring the organisation supports all students to relate their learning to careers and the world of work from an early age.' However, not all governing bodies have appointed someone to this role. The Committee would support school and college governors having a greater role in the development of careers education in Islington, and suggests that each governing body should appoint a governor with sole responsibility for overseeing their school's careers offer. The council can support governors to excel in this role by providing access to destinations data and information on the opportunities, resources and services available to young people. It is suggested that having a named governor with this responsibility for each secondary

school and college would ensure that this important work receives appropriate focus at governor level.

- 2.93 **It is recommended that each secondary school and college should nominate one of their governors to oversee their careers education offer. The council should engage with those governors to support them in this role. This could include providing them with information, such as destinations data for their former pupils, including those who were referred to alternative provision.**

(c) engaging with young people

- 2.94 Some of the most useful evidence received as part of this review was from young people themselves, who clearly explained the barriers they face and what type of support they need. The Committee considers it essential that any actions arising from this review are developed in partnership with young people. It is important that young people are able to help shape the services they access, as this will ensure that services remain relevant and meet their needs.
- 2.95 **It is recommended that actions arising as a result of this review should be developed in partnership with young people to ensure that the council's employment and progression support services meet their needs effectively.**

### **3. Conclusions**

- 3.1 The Committee welcomes the work of the council's employment and progression support services and commends their efforts to increase the number of young people progressing into education, employment and training. Services have reduced the number of young people NEET and are well received by young people. A range of support is provided to schools, and it is hoped that innovative work to develop employer-led careers education will be effective. However, the Committee has identified areas for further development, particularly in relation to making services more holistic and raising the awareness of local services and opportunities.
- 3.2 The Committee has made 16 recommendations in response to the evidence received. It is hoped that the Committee's recommendations will further improve outcomes for young people and contribute to a further reduction in the number of young people NEET.
- 3.3 In carrying out the review, the Committee met with young people, officers, school leaders, officers of a neighbouring authority, representatives of local businesses and others to gain a balanced view. The Committee would like to thank the witnesses that gave evidence in relation to the scrutiny. The Executive is asked to endorse the Committee's recommendations.

<b>SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID)</b>
<b>Review:</b> Post-16 Education, Employment and Training
<b>Scrutiny Review Committee:</b> Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
<b>Director leading the review:</b> Alison Cramer, Head of Partnerships and Service Support
<b>Lead Officers:</b> Holly Toft, Head of Post-16, Play and Youth
<p><b>Overall aims of the review:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To explore how to sustain improvements and continue to increase the number of young people progressing to, and in, post 16 education, employment and training; and</li> <li>2. To suggest ways to prevent young people becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the first place.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Objectives of the review:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To understand the profile of 16-18 and 18-24 year olds in Islington currently progressing to and in education, employment and training; and which groups of young people are most vulnerable to being NEET</li> <li>2. To assess the strategic role of Islington Council in helping to increase the number of young people in EET</li> <li>3. To understand the obstacles to progression into EET</li> <li>4. To identify and assess specific measures which will increase the progression into EET for groups of young people with low levels of participation in EET and other young people vulnerable to becoming NEET</li> <li>5. To assess the availability and effectiveness of information, advice, guidance and employability skills support for young people regarding post 16 education, employment and training</li> <li>6. To examine 'promising practice' approaches at school and local authority level that indicate the best success in reducing the number of young people NEET and preventing young people becoming NEET, and how they might apply locally.</li> </ol> <p>N.B. Objectives 2, 4 and 5 cover implementation of the Employment Commission recommendations, an area highlighted by the Committee for review.</p>

## **How is the review to be carried out:**

### **Scope of the Review**

The review will focus on:

#### **The national context**

- Legislative framework
- National policy

#### **Supporting young people**

- Profile of young people NEET
- The local offer to support young people including roles, responsibilities, opportunities and resources
- The support available to young people within schools
- Obstacles for young people to progress into EET

#### **Opportunities to make local arrangements more effective**

- Partnership working between schools, the council, post-16 providers, businesses, and the voluntary and community sector.
- Local and external projects, models and approaches to support young people and vulnerable groups – promising practices

#### **Types of evidence:**

- **Documentary evidence including**
  - Contextual report/presentation
  - 'Reading list' of key documents for Committee members
  - Outcomes data for young people in Islington
  - Case studies
  - Government guidance and officer briefing notes
  - Service plans, performance indicators and update on impact
- **Witness evidence including**
  - Officer presentations
  - A range of secondary schools
  - Other local authorities
  - The Progress Team, the Careers Network and the Youth Employment Team
  - The Business/Employment Board
  - Other organisations delivering projects to support EET
- **Visits**
  - Young people
  - Services delivering support to young people

### **Additional Information:**

This topic addresses the following strategic corporate objectives from Islington's 2015/19 Corporate Plan:

- Helping people find the right job: Create change for the next generation
- Making Islington a place where our residents have a good quality of life: Help children to achieve their potential

The main issues are:

- The rate of young people who are NEET in Islington has previously been persistently above the central London average. This issue is complex and has been stubborn to shift. However, recent figures have seen a welcome reduction in the NEET population.
- This group is a broad and diverse group with differing needs. Being NEET, whether at 16, 17 or 18 either may be a consequence of, or compound the outcomes for young people in alternative provision, attending New River College, known to the Youth Offending service or be in some other way vulnerable such as a child who has been looked after by the Council. However, the problem does not stop there; the chance of being NEET increases with age because some young people continue not to have the skills or opportunities to move on.
- The 'NEET' status affects young people's life chances and has cost implications to the public sector. Spending time NEET at a young age has a detrimental effect on physical and mental health with unemployment linked to ill-health, poor mental health and an increased risk of suicide. There are various risk factors and pre-cursors aligned to young people who end up NEET which can then transform into later forms of disadvantage and poor welfare outcomes. This impacts not just on education but also health, employment, welfare and housing. The time spent NEET also affects public finances through increased welfare and healthcare spending and can contribute to late intervention spend. The average 16-18 year old NEET has an estimated cost of £56,000 before retirement age. This is based on the costs of welfare benefits payments, costs to health and criminal justice services, and loss of tax and national insurance revenue.

In carrying out the review the Committee will consider equalities implications and resident impacts identified by witnesses. The Executive is required to have due regard to these, and any other relevant implications, when responding to the review recommendations.

Programme	
Key output:	To be submitted to Committee on:
1. Scrutiny Initiation Document	28 June 2016
2. Concluding Discussion	20 March 2017
3. Final Report	10 July 2017

**Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee – Work Plan**

**Our role and focus as a scrutiny committee:**

1. To explore how to sustain improvements and continue to increase the number of young people progressing to, and in, post 16 education, employment and training; and
2. To suggest ways to prevent young people becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the first place.

<p><b>Outcomes and progression</b></p>	<p><b>SID Objective 1:</b> To understand the profile of 16-18 and 18-24 year olds in Islington currently progressing to and in education, employment and training; and which groups of young people are most vulnerable to being NEET</p> <p><b>SID Objective 3:</b> To understand the obstacles to progression into EET</p>
<p><b>Support to young people and accountability</b></p>	<p><b>SID Objective 2:</b> To assess the strategic role of Islington Council in helping to increase the number of young people in EET</p> <p><b>SID Objective 5:</b> To assess the availability and effectiveness of information, advice, guidance and employability skills support for young people regarding post 16 education, employment and training</p>
<p><b>Prevention and early intervention</b></p>	<p><b>SID Objective 4:</b> To identify and assess specific measures which will increase the progression into EET for groups of young people with low levels of participation in EET and other young people vulnerable to becoming NEET</p> <p><b>SID Objective 6:</b> To examine ‘promising practice’ approaches at school and local authority level that indicate the best success in reducing the number of young people NEET and preventing young people becoming NEET, and how they might apply locally.</p>

**Work programme for post-16 EET scrutiny**

**1. Background information and additional documentation (*circulated by email*)**

- Department for Education, ‘Participation of young people in education, employment or training – Statutory guidance for local authorities’, September 2014
- Department for Education, ‘Careers guidance and inspiration in schools – Statutory guidance for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff’, March 2015
- London Councils, ‘London Ambitions: shaping a successful careers offer for all young Londoners’, June 2015
- The Islington Employment Commission, ‘Working Better, The final report of the Islington Employment Commission – Summary’, November 2014
- Islington Employment Services Board, ‘One Year On: Making it Work Better’, November 2015

- Envoy Partnership, 'A Social Return on Investment, Evaluation of the ESF NEET Fast Forward Programme', February 2015

## 2. Witness Evidence Plan

<b>Date: Thursday 22 September 2016</b>		
<b>Evidence theme: Outcomes and progression</b>		
<b>Who</b>	<b>Organisation/remit</b>	<b>Area of focus</b>
Holly Toft, Head of Post-16	Islington Council: Children's Services	The current picture of 16-18 in education employment and training and 18-24 year olds in employment/progressing to employment; the local offer to support young people including roles, responsibilities, opportunities and resources; key issues such as progression to university; distance to learning, engagement/re-engagement and cross borough issues.

### **Briefing notes prior to meeting:**

- Contextual report

<b>Date: Tuesday 18 October 2016</b>		
<b>Evidence theme: Support to young people and accountability – Information, Advice and Guidance</b>		
<b>Who</b>	<b>Organisation/remit</b>	<b>Area of focus</b>
Paul McIntyre, Assistant Head	Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School	IAG: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools and careers network – how it works</li> <li>• Quality</li> <li>• Good practice</li> </ul>
Lesley Thain, Head of Employer Engagement	Central Foundation Boys' School	
Alison Bennett, Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) Specialist	Islington Council – Children's Services  CEIAG specialist re quality of IAG and work of employment commission re: careers entitlement;	
Holly Toft, Head of Post-16	Islington Council: Children's Services	Responses to questions raised at the previous meeting

### **Briefing notes prior to meeting:**

- Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance in Islington's Secondary Schools – legal and policy context, brief history of responsibility for IAG, description of Careers Network, 'Gold Standard' for New River College and AP

<b>Date: Monday 21 November 2016</b>		
<b>Evidence theme: Support to young people and accountability – Employability skills</b>		
<b>Who</b>	<b>Organisation/remit</b>	<b>Area of focus</b>
Cherrylynn Jaffier, Progress Advisor (Vocational Pathways)	Islington Council – Works with young people pre-16 who are interested in a vocational pathway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support to young people interested in a vocational pathway</li> </ul>
Lorraine Blyth, Post-16 Participation Manager	Islington Council – Children’s Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employability skills: 16 – 18 year olds</li> <li>• Employability skills: 18 – 24 year olds</li> <li>• Apprenticeships</li> <li>• Youth employment</li> <li>• Connecting with businesses</li> </ul>
Hamish Mackay, Young Employment and Apprenticeships Manager	Islington Council – Children’s Services	

***Briefing notes prior to meeting:***

- Employability skills support for young people
- The role of the Progress Advisor (Vocational Pathways)

<b>Date: Wednesday 11 January 2017 Evidence theme: The role of the charity / community sector</b>		
<b>Who</b>	<b>Organisation/remit</b>	<b>Area of focus</b>
Mer-IT	Mer-IT – community organisation, providing young people with ICT skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community groups working with young people</li> </ul>
Groundwork London	Groundwork London – charity providing a targeted youth programme.	

***Briefing notes prior to meeting:***

- Responses to Questions Raised at November Meeting

**Date: Tuesday 28 February 2017**

**Evidence theme: Support to young people; Prevention and early intervention  
+ Concluding discussion**

<b>Who</b>	<b>Organisation/remit</b>	<b>Area of focus</b>
Jo Margrie, 14-19 Programme Manager / Pauline Adams, Head of Service Young Hackney	LB Hackney Council – to provide a comparison to another local authority	The approach of a neighbouring local authority to reducing number of NEETs and preventing young people becoming NEET
Jodi Pilling, Learning and Skills Manager	Islington Council – Children’s Services	Careers Clusters
Dorcas Morgan, Development Director, Park Theatre	Local businesses working with young people	What local businesses are doing to progress this agenda
John Nugent, Chief Executive, Green and Fortune		

***Briefing notes prior to meeting:***

- Islington Schools/College Careers Cluster

**3. Visits**

<b>Who</b>	<b>Organisation/remit</b>	<b>Area of focus</b>	<b>When</b>
Young People and the Progress Team	Islington Council – Children’s Services	Support to vulnerable young people – visit to the Progress Team and meeting with some young people (possibly those who are supposed to be in Yr 11) – to occur in the evening – should cover the barriers and obstacles to EET	8 December 2016, 6pm – Lift Youth Hub

**4. Report**

**20 March 2016:** Concluding Discussion

**10 July 2017:** Final report