



Chief Executive's Department
Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD

Report of: Councillor Richard Watts, Leader of the Council

Meeting of	Date	Ward(s)
Council	3 December 2015	All
Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt

Islington Employment Commission – One Year On

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 Note the contents of the 'One Year On: Making it work better' report by the Islington Employment Services Board.

2 The Islington Employment Commission

- 2.1 The Islington Employment Commission was launched in November 2014. The final meeting of Commissioners was held on 5th February 2015 and the Commission was then wound down with a commitment to formally report back after one year of implementation - in November 2015.
- 2.2 The recommendations of the report fall into three strands:
 - Creating change for the people who need it – redesigning employment support so that it is targeted to those who need it the most
 - Employers creating change – supporting employers to recruit better locally and get involved in the local area
 - Creating change for the next generation – securing a partnership where employers, schools and others will work together to inspire young people about the world of work, opening their eyes to the range of learning and career opportunities that are open to them.

The report also includes a "message to Government" asking for devolution of employment services to the local level, making youth careers a real priority and taking vocational education seriously.

3 Significant Milestones

- 3.1 Much of the work in the first year of implementation has been to lay the foundations for long term and systemic change. **The progress made to date has been outlined in the 'Making it Work Better' highlight report of the Employment Services Board, which accompanies this report.** There have been a number of achievements which are already delivering change for residents and which demonstrate the Council and partner commitment to the vision set out by the Employment Commission

- 1023 people have been supported into work in 2014/15 through employment support provided by Islington Council and a leading local partner Mental Health Working. This is a significant increase from 816 in 2013/14 and the iWork coaching model is supporting this progress.
- The Employability Practitioners Network has over 60 members and supports frontline employment practitioners. It has developed an Employability Charter (included in the public report) to embed and roll out best practice in employment support.
- A new Islington Aspires website has been established with case studies from a number of local employers to galvanise more employers to get involved locally and to clearly set out how they can do this. The website will be launched alongside the report.
- Through partnership working with the Business Engagement Leadership Group (BELG), 108 Islington residents have secured employment since January 2015 at the King's Cross redevelopment – a significant increase on the 51 placed in 2014.
- Islington Council has become an accredited Timewise Council to promote flexible working and lead by example and has become a member of the Businesses for Islington Giving (BIG) Alliance in order to develop its staff volunteering.
- BELG member the BIG Alliance have increased their mentoring programme to 8 schools and colleges and have secured funding from the Richard Reeves Foundation to expand the programme to all 10 secondary schools in Islington, as well as City and Islington College.

4 Progress to date

- 4.1 Whilst there have been significant milestones achieved, much of the work of the Commission is pointed towards long term and systemic change, where work is in train and currently being developed.
- 4.2 An **Employment Equalities Objective** was agreed by the Employment Services Board and the Executive in April 2015. This aims to increase the proportion of disabled people in employment with targets to reduce the number of people claiming Employment Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit by 2,660 by March 2019 in order to bring it in line with the inner London average. This puts a key recommendation of the Employment Commission – the need to triage our efforts to those who need it most into effect and targets it towards a group which historically has received little support and where there has been little movement (the ESA client group has remained broadly stable for the last 15 years.)
- 4.3 The **Health and Work** programme responds to these challenges. In July 2015 the Health and Well-being Board agreed to establish the programme run jointly between the Council and Islington CCG (in partnership with Jobcentre Plus) to oversee the delivery, management and governance of an NHS England trial programme as well as the coordination of a programme of 'system change' activities on health and employment across the borough. The programme aims to challenge a number of systemic failures in relation to the intersection between health and employment – such as that providers are not incentivised or monitored on employment outcomes for patients, that the Work Capability Assessment does not identify what work people could do, nor is the Fit Note connected to an employment support pathway and that there is insufficient capacity for high quality employment support for those with a health condition or a disability. A number of projects form the Health and Work programme including the **Working Capital** support for ESA Work Programme Leavers, delivered through Central London Forward, **Working Better** providing employment coaches in 4 GP surgeries as well as **iCOPE** and **JCP co-location** providing therapeutic support to JSA and ESA claimants through the Highgate and Barnsbury Jobcentres.
- 4.4 The **Universal Services Delivered Locally (USDL)** pilot has been delivered in partnership with Department for Work and Pensions aiming to re-shape employment support at a local level. Islington has been one of 11 areas as part of a wider DWP trial

to test support arrangements for one of the key changes within the government's programme of welfare reforms – the introduction of Universal Credit. The project is trialling different approaches to help people make the transition to Universal Credit and has included digital and budgeting support as well as employment support through the iWork Service. Since its start on 1st September 2014, 800 residents have been triaged for support – with employment support having the highest demand. 81 people have been supported into paid employment (including a number who have been claiming JSA for many years), 50 have undertaken other employment support to get them ready for work (e.g. voluntary work), 146 have received support to manage their budgets, and 143 have had their IT skills assessed and supported to reach the required level. Universal Credit will go live in Islington on 9 November 2015 for single JSA claimants with no housing costs. Wider implementation will start next year.

- 4.5 The **Islington Strategic Partnership for Employment and Employability Practitioners Network** are working towards building out the partnership of organisations involved in providing employment support. The Strategic Partnership brings together 17 organisations and aims to work better together to create an integrated programme of employment support that will help people into work across the borough – it will act as a steering group to drive quality and will allow for collaboration of funding bids and the coordination of employment clusters in partnership with voluntary sector organisations. As outlined in the highlight report the Employability practitioners network includes 60 members from partner organisations and brings together front line practitioners in order to develop partnerships and best practice for all those involved with employment support – setting out a Charter defining high quality employment support.
- 4.6 The Employment Commission advocated an employer led approach to implementing its recommendations which allowed the Council and partners to promote and grow the role of employers locally. The Council has developed an **Employer Engagement Strategy** which sets out key growth sectors and principles for employer engagement in order to further the Council and partners' aims to tackle unemployment as a route to tackling poverty and inequality whilst advancing the strong business case for employer engagement locally.
- 4.7 The **Business Engagement Leadership Group** brings together all those involved in working with employers in order to develop partnership working and to more strategically manage interaction with employers in order to achieve maximum impact. The group is chaired by local businessman John Nugent, Director of Green and Fortune – a King's Cross based catering company. As highlighted above, the group has had significant success in increasing the rate of opportunities on the King's Cross development and in the surrounding areas recruited through KX Recruit going to Islington residents- now standing at 40%. Other strands have improved access to mentoring and work experience placements across partners and looked at addressing skills gaps through a sector specific approach. An employer led working group looking at the hiring and pipeline challenges within the hospitality sector will be the first to benefit from this approach.
- 4.8 The **Islington Aspires** campaign minisite will be hosted by Islington Council but will mark a partnership between employer engagement organisations to set out a clear offer for local employers about how they can best get involved for their business and the clear business benefits that this will confer. Employers were clear that they wanted one place to find out how best to get involved locally and this minisite responds to that request. The site has been designed so that it will be able to link into the Business Portal once this has been developed and launched.
- 4.9 An important area in which the Council can leverage its influence is through its buying power and the use of **Social Value** through its procurement processes. The Council's Procurement Strategy 2015-2020 sets out clear recommendations for the implementation of social value including representation to champion social value on the Council's Procurement Board and having clear guidance so that commissioners can support community benefit throughout the whole supply chain. This guidance has been implemented to build social value into commissioning with a particular employment focus including creating skills and training opportunities (including apprenticeships)

creation of new employment, provision of meaningful work experience, supporting adults and young people through provision of careers education including mentoring and through providing additional opportunities for individuals or groups facing greater social or economic barriers such as ex-offenders, parents and those with learning or other disabilities through job carving and flexible working.

- 4.10 In July 2015, Islington became accredited as a **Timewise Council** for flexible working embedding flexibility through its own recruitment, within its supply chains as outlined above as well as leading by example to promote and grow flexible employment across the borough. There is still room for development within the Council's own practices to ensure that as many roles as possible are advertised in a flexible way, both to demonstrate commitment to flexible working as a way of tackling unemployment but also as a way to tackle skills shortages and improve the quality of applicants by allowing a more diverse group of applicants to apply. In October 2015, the BIG Alliance focussed its quarterly meeting around employment with Timewise presenting their model of flexible employment to a wide range of local employers. The meeting set out how HR and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) can be brought closer together in order to mainstream social value into the recruitment and staff development of large employers. This meeting forms the basis for developing this line of work with employers, including exploring how this can be further developed.
- 4.11 The Council has established a **Youth Employment and apprenticeships team**, which is engaging employers to work in Islington schools. The team are also working to improve the council's own apprenticeship scheme, by introducing adapted recruitment methods and an increased focus on progression for our apprentices.
- 4.12 There has been significant progress made to increase the **links between employers and schools** including an increase in the BIG Alliance's mentoring scheme which will soon operate in all 10 secondary schools in Islington as well as the Sixth Form Centre of City and Islington College. This sits alongside a programme of curriculum based links between employers and schools with a focus on the STEM curriculum to further build the links between schools and the world of work.

5 One Year On

- 5.1 The one year point marks the formal end of the Employment Commission process, with the aim that the majority of the recommendations of the Commission have been implemented or are on the road to implementation and have been mainstreamed within departments and partner agencies. In order to mark this, a number of events and research has been commissioned and undertaken in order to update key stakeholders on the progress that has been made and to further galvanise support for the aims of the Commission.
- 5.2 The **Innovation Unit** has been commissioned to carry out ethnographic research into service user understanding of employment support services. This research carried out half day 'a day in the life' ethnographies with 10 residents – both those from the iWork service and from voluntary sector partners. Some of the case studies from the report will be included in the public highlight report – the full findings and case studies will be used to inform the development of the service and will be published in December 2015.
- 5.3 An event to mark **One Year On of the Employment Commission** and to formally launch **Making it Work Better: One Year On from the Islington Employment Commission** was held on 23rd November 2015 and was hosted by Linklaters, a law firm based on the City fringes. The event will also launch the Islington Aspires website and will be targeted towards professionals involved in employment support, employer engagement and work with young people in relation to employment and careers and employers themselves. A series of internal communications events and briefings will also mark the one year on in order to further galvanise the aims and objectives of the Commission and embed this across the Council.

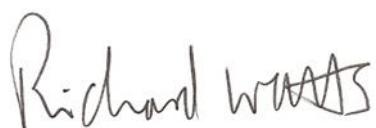
Appendices:

'One Year On: Making it work better' report by the Islington Employment Services Board

Background papers:

None

Signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard WATTS".

25 November 2015

Councillor Richard Watts, Leader of the Council Date