

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT

‘YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN TORBAY’

The report published in June 2013 on Youth Unemployment in Torbay highlights a number of key issues that now warrant a response across sectors and agencies in order to give the best possible opportunity of economic prosperity to the young people of Torbay.

This response is developed in partnership with Torbay Development Agency, evidencing a commitment to collaborative strategies, projects and resourcing that marks a starting point in developing a broader plan addressing the recommended areas for action.

Recommendations

5.1 Torbay Council must lead by example to ensure that young people in Torbay have access to the:

- Right careers education, information, advice and guidance
- Right skills
- Right employment opportunities

Response

There is a key role for TCS within its Youth Offer to ensure that careers advice, information and guidance is accessible to all young people. In particular, for those young people who may face barriers to access in school, we need to facilitate this within youth settings, and will focus this around the Parkfield Youth Hub and the commissioned neighbourhood youth provision. We will develop work in partnership with education and training providers and with employers that builds work readiness skills and experience as this is a key strand of the report coming from both young people and from employers within this report, and within national reports on NEET young people.

Working alongside the National Apprenticeship Lead for Torbay, TCS is striving to provide apprenticeship opportunities where possible: there are two new positions within Parkfield Youth Hub and more than five new posts in schools following the lead by Combe Pafford. We are looking to further develop the grounds maintenance training programme at Parkfield and are working with South Devon College to pilot a work-based training programme for young people with disabilities. We are also exploring enterprise opportunities with and for young people, and have begun looking at partnerships to develop aspiration and business skills in young people who may otherwise lack a sense of their own potential.

- 5.2 The Council should strengthen and streamline the partnership arrangements it has with Jobcentre Plus, schools and colleges, the community and voluntary sector and local employers to model a new approach that provides a multi agency hub (or hubs) with a focus on creating opportunities for young people to reach their full potential and access employment based on the current work being undertaken at Parkfield, Brixham Youth Enquiry Service and Combe Pafford Business and Enterprise School

Response

The TDA and Torbay and South Devon Employment and Skills Board (ESB) would agree that the Council should strengthen and streamline the partnership arrangement it has around young people. However, to achieve the aim of every young person reaching their full potential, it is imperative that work is developed with the input from local employers and that potential employment outcomes and opportunities are also created. This is a belief shared by TCS who view partnerships and careful targeting of resources as key to increasing employment and training prospects in young people. Through the Youth Offer, TCS will work with the TDA and via the ESB to develop strategies matching gaps in knowledge and skills to the local labour market and seeking to link local businesses with schools and youth settings to establish mentoring partnerships, particularly within areas of high general unemployment where aspirations and confidence are low.

Councillors and Council representatives who sit as local authority appointed Governors on school governing bodies should be using their positions to influence their schools to provide stronger links to local business and to offer breadth of information, advice and guidance to help their students become more employable.

- 5.3 By ensuring the Employment and Skills Board has a focus on reducing youth unemployment in Torbay, the Council can help to ensure that every young person reaches their full potential.

Response

The ESB has always prioritized youth employment within its remit and has had various successes through promotion of apprenticeships and work experience. The Board is currently under review as it is just over 4 years since it was established with funding from the Learning and Skills Council. It is felt that it is now timely that the Board's impact to date is evaluated and assessed to ensure that the structure and remit is relevant and fit for purpose into the future. It is likely that the Board will cease to operate in its current guise and will move to a more virtual process, but with the recognition that youth unemployment continues to be an important issue so that it is highly likely to remain a priority after the review is complete. Within this review TCS will seek to play an active role has sought to ensure that any future format fully includes and supports strategies and priorities emerging from its policy priorities, and will look to

ensure that 'reaching full potential' is translated into a set of plans to meet the specific needs that have been outlined in the report.

- 5.4 The Employment and Skills Board should bring together employers and schools and colleges to collaborate in the further development of careers education programmes which include the skills necessary for employment and an awareness of the opportunities available in Torbay.

Response

TCS contracts Careers South West to deliver information, advice and guidance on careers to its 'vulnerable' young people and will monitor areas of unmet need particularly in this group. The focus on employability skills and awareness of local opportunities will be developed as set out in 5.2.

- 5.5 In bringing together the various agencies and organisations which support young people to gain employment, the Council should apply any learning from other authorities, for example the 'Cornwall Works' programme.

Response

'Torbay Works' is being explored by the TDA through a funding bid to Jobcentre Plus. In an early discussion we have discussed ensuring a Torbay model has strong target areas for youth.

- 5.6 The Council should also review its recruitment, contracts and procurement policies to ensure that they promote the employment of young people, apprenticeships and work experience opportunities and that this should also be promoted with other public sector bodies.

Response

TCS needs to develop a policy particularly relating to contracts and procurement that encourages work experience and apprenticeships and this could be picked up within the commissioning team. In addition, there is scope to develop youth engagement in the delivery of services in a way that evidences a commitment and value and that will be a stepping stone for young people into real work. Examples of this can be seen within the Young Inspectors programme (TCS and Play Torbay) and within the commissioning process for the Neighbourhood Youth grant funding.