

Committee: Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny and Overview Panel

Date: 13th February 2019

Wards: ALL

Subject: Routes to employment for vulnerable cohorts – further report on outstanding matters

Lead officer: Director for Environment and Regeneration, Chris Lee

Lead member: Councillor Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Environmental Sustainability and Regeneration.

Contact officer: Sara Williams, futureMerton, Programme Manager for Business and Economy

Recommendations:

- A. The Panel note the updates on outstanding matters of the Children and Young Peoples (CYP) Scrutiny Panel's Action Plan: vulnerable cohorts into employment task group recommendations report presented 27th June 2018.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to respond to the CYP expression of interest for a further report back to the CYP Scrutiny Panel:

1.1.1 Receiving information on the work currently being undertaken by Coram with Looked After Children and Care Leavers and seeing the resulting strategy; and

1.1.2 Request that the data should be provided to the Panel in six months on the number of apprenticeships by Directorate fulfilled by those within the target groups. Of these how many have started, stayed and left should be stated.

1.1.3 Members requested that an appropriate representative from the HR team attend the meeting to explain these statistics.

1.2 The Panel minutes of the June 2018 meeting also noted how impressed they are with the opportunities being provided for vulnerable young people in Merton and the success these are having. This has been strengthened by the "Towards Employment Pilot" being delivered by the My Futures team. An update on the schemes successes has been included in this report under 3.6.

2 DETAILS

2.1. At their meeting on 21st October 2015, the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel decided to dedicate a task group activity to look at the support provided for vulnerable cohorts. Initially, the Panel took a broad approach considering:

- The housing and health offer for care leavers and looked after children to prevent homelessness and unemployment; and
 - Educational attainment for disabled children and young people.
- 2.2. However, following the initial research, the Panel determined that the task group should focus more specifically on the support provided for vulnerable cohorts to progress into employment. By vulnerable cohorts the Panel agreed that this should specifically mean children and young people in care/care leavers and/or those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The report and recommendations resulting from the task group review were presented on 20th March 2017.
- 2.3 The response and action plan were then presented back to the Panel on 10th January 2018 and the Panel further updated on 27th June 2018. The Panel requested a review six months into the action plan as some of the recommendations were only part met (See Appendix A - Routes to employment for vulnerable cohorts Actions – 6 month update June 2018). This report provides an update on those outstanding actions.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The Panel set out seven recommendations around supporting the vulnerable groups agreeing that this should specifically mean children and young people in care/care leavers and/or those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- 3.2. Many of the actions focus on Merton as the employer as well as Merton's ability to support residents through local procurement contracts. Partner's support is recognised through the Sustainable Communities and Transport Partnership, in particular the partnership work carried out through the Economic Wellbeing Group (EWG).
- 3.3. Merton reviews opportunities to up skill and generate jobs for local people through major procurement contracts on a case-by-case basis, given that not all contracts lend themselves to providing these types of opportunities. For example, we will be seeking the use of local labour supply and/or apprenticeships when we go out to tender for our Highways contract later this year. We will also seek such opportunities when going out to tender through the Council's newly formed, wholly owned, Housing Company. Some examples of case-by-case work undertaken are included in the June 2018 update under Appendix A - Routes to employment for vulnerable cohorts Actions – 6 month update June 2018) (Recommendation 2) and an update on the Towards Employment Pilot under 3.6 below. .
- 3.4 **Recommendation 4** - *We recommend how to engage target groups and demonstrate the Council's commitment to their employment be explored. This might be included in the Looked After Children/Care Leavers Pledge.*
- 3.4.1 At the 27th June meeting, the Panel were advised that Coram have been commissioned to engage our LAC and Care Leavers and that the outcomes from the engagement were to inform the LAC and Care Leavers' Strategies. The Panel requested feedback on the Coram survey. From the survey 44% of

care leavers responded. Of which 2/3 were between 18-20 and 62% BME. 13% identified themselves as NEET with a further 22% stating that they mainly stayed at home during the day. This indicates a sense of detachment from the opportunities that are available to young people not in the care system and the impact of not being engaged in employment, education, training (EET) over a long time period. Indeed our current NEET figures for care leavers are 56%.

3.5 The Panel also requested details around support provided to the vulnerable groups through Merton HR, and in particular requested that the data should be provided to the Panel in six months on the number of apprenticeships by Directorate fulfilled by those within the target groups. Of these how many have started, stayed and left should be stated.

3.5.1 HR advise that since the last review, they have provided support to vulnerable young persons in interviewing skills and techniques and closing date deadlines have been extended to enable the young people to apply.

3.5.2 With regards to work experience, the Council offered 30 placements. Only 15 placements were taken up by young people. The feedback from participants was quite positive with 90% of respondents stating that they found the work experience enriching and would recommend to their peer group. HR are unable to identify if any of the young people were LAC or SEND supported. They did ask the Schools if there were any reasonable adjustments or additional support needed. Work experience was a valuable experience for the students, who at the end of their time with the council were given a certificate of achievement for completion of their time with Merton. After discussions with CSF it was felt that not only should the council advertise the existing programme to schools but also consider extending to some of our vulnerable young people in the summer break (July – August) where they are more prone to incidents in the streets. The above approach would mean that there are two schemes as the schools would not participate in a scheme during the school holidays. HR intend to continue to work closely with CSF.

3.5.3 There has been a significant improvement in the number of apprenticeships in the organisation. There are currently 29 admin roles occupied by agency workers. HR is seeking to convert these posts possibly to apprenticeships. The take-up of apprenticeships has increased as the apprenticeship standards have fully developed, for example, apprenticeships in social work and leadership and management.

3.5.4 Apprenticeship numbers

| Jan-19 | In Progress | *Pending | Total |
|---------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Non Schools | 38 | 71 | 109 |
| Schools | 20 | 19 | 39 |
| Total | 58 | 90 | 148 |

*The pending is apprenticeships to start in the next month

- 3.5.5 HR need to ensure that all apprentices have an end of apprenticeship meeting – This is not part of the current process as lead by line managers. Not all staff take part in exit interviews.
- 3.6 Officers in CSF have also been identifying opportunities for young people through our own supply chain and local businesses who are seeking to recruit. The "Towards Employment" Pilot was introduced in August 2018 to create a pathway model through which Merton's young people, who are at significant risk of economic exclusion, are able to access work experience opportunities. This is in recognition of the sustained value this can add to their long term overall wellbeing by increasing their employability. The Pilot's objectives aligns with the CYP Scrutiny Panel Review's Recommendation 2 and so has been included in the report to update members on the success achieved between August 2018 and January 2019.
- 3.6.1 CSF Commissioning team were encouraged to bid for a sum of s.106 funds from an agreement that required the £32.8k to be spend on "local skills training". Initially the programme was to support residents aged 16-25 with a focus on vulnerable young people (care leavers, those on the risk register and those known to the Youth Offending Team). However, through support and cooperation this has meant other residents are able to receive employment both in and within adjoining boroughs, particularly Croydon.
- 3.6.2 A proportion of the funding supported the recruitment of a p/t (2 days per week) Youth Employability and Employer Engagement Officer, (YEEE officer), who was recruited to coordinate the engagement with young people to support them with training, work experience and employment.
- 3.6.3 The funding is also used to pay accredited training courses in CSCS, vouchers for young people whilst at work or training to encourage engagement and tools/equipment to support their route to employment.
- 3.6.4 CSF Commissioning team have sought out work opportunities from supply chain contractors and local businesses. The YEEE and the lead officer Mellisa Stewart (Commissioning Manager Alternative Provision) engage with officers internally to understand projects about to be procured and approach suppliers such as Veolia and ID Verde for opportunities around work experience, apprenticeships and other employment. While supply chain businesses are supporting future opportunities, the majority of opportunities accessed have been with businesses outside of our supply chain.
- 3.6.5 The achieved outcomes since August 2018:
- 103 YP have been referred predominately male who make up just over 90%, (93YP).
 - 58 of those referred reside in Merton and therefore this figure excludes Merton care leavers who reside in neighbouring boroughs.
 - 28%, (16YP), of the 58 Merton residents are care leavers,
 - 45% of the 58 Merton residents, (26YP), are or were known to YOT

- 12%, (7YP), are both care leavers and known to YOT
- 64%, (37YP), failed to achieve a pass in English or maths by the end of compulsory education. Some did not achieve any qualifications.
- 33 job outcomes have been achieved
- 3 apprenticeships started
- 8 employers engaged with, (three of whom are supply chain contractors),
- 33 YP have received job offers
- 3 have started apprenticeships
- 10 have achieved nationally recognised sector specific certification
- 5 due to engage in 15 day training course followed by interview for guaranteed seasonable work – opportunity unique to Merton residents.
- An estimated ¹£321k ROI

3.6.6 The additional benefits perceived:

- Reduction in anti-social behaviour/crime in the borough - 22 YOT, at least 7 known to be of significant risk to community
- Reduction in Universal Credit claims
- Reduction in the risk of physical and mental wellbeing.
- That the YP on the scheme have improved work outcomes.

3.6.7 While priority is given to Merton's young people with vulnerable characteristics, opportunities are also shared with Merton's partners increasing the accessing routes of our young people. Referring partners include South Thames College, Mitcham JCP, DWP, R2S, The Training and Recruitment Partnership (TRP), Tooting and Mitcham Football, Moat Housing Association as well as the NHS and Merton based homeless and independent living hostel. In addition, internal departments such as social care, YOT and My Futures also refer.

3.6.8 All of the young people referred are supported throughout their placement and, where necessary, for the first two months of employment. In circumstances where a young person has an allocated keyworker, My Futures co-ordinate the support delivered. My Futures will deliver the support in circumstances where the young person does not have an allocated keyworker.

3.6.8 The officers time to support programme so far:

- YEEE officer 2 days a week fully funded from s.106
- Mellisa (minimum of 3 days per week donated by CSF Commissioning team),
- My Futures staff also triage and provide support for residents who do not meet their services criteria. Alongside, the My Futures team assesses the young people's opportunity readiness and ensures support throughout the placement. The employer also receives support and clear lines of communication are established.
- Sara Williams from Future Merton
- Mark Holmes from Future Merton funded from Neighbourhood CIL

¹ The ROI is based on salaries achieved at 20 hours per week; many are doing more than 20 hours so likely to be more than that quoted.

- 3.6.9 The companies providing the employment are:
- Veolia
 - UPS (temporary contracts)
 - Surrey Envelopes,
 - LillyWhite Construction (through the Neighbourhood CIL funded town centre programme)
 - Idverde,
 - Bestways,
 - Coombe Accident Repair.
 - An unnamed Merton employer requested help to fill 11 apprenticeship places.

3.7 My Futures are currently working with HR to increase our employability offer to our YP.

3.7.1 Merton council hosting a term-time only work placement programme for young adults with EHCP, similar to the graduate rotation programme. There is funding available to resource the staff needed to support this programme and a clear evidence base for the cost savings this would immediately generate. Placements in work environment are limited to a maximum of two hours in morning and two hours in afternoon.

3.7.2 Increasing our work experience offer to include any young resident up to the age of 25, (those that are NEET, those that are economically inactive and those currently at university). There is targeted promotion to cover summer holidays and cyclical spikes in youth inactivity.

3.7.3 During the recruitment process, identifying suitable positions that would enable either a work trial prior to application deadline and/or guaranteed interviews for YP who meet the minimum criteria and who have characteristics that make them a priority i.e. care leavers. Facilities Management, Planning and Enforcement are already doing this.

3.7.4 HR providing mock interview experience for the YP who meet our priority groups when they are shortlisted for internal and external jobs.

3.7.5 Officers encouraging departments to 'adopt' a school. The department commits to providing periodic sector specific information advice and guidance, hosting pupils, providing work experience placements etc.

3.8 All of the above can be capped to minimise impact on our workforce and can prioritise our care leavers, those known to YOT, those with EHCPs etc.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

No alternative options offered at this stage.

5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 5.1 The actions were discussed between officers in human resources, Looked After Children Permanency and Placements, Education Inclusion, Joint Commissioning and Partnerships, Commercial Services, futureMerton and Public Health.
- 5.2 The EWG was consulted during the Scrutiny Review and since then have been kept updated on proposed recommendations. All employment/skills programmes offered by partners on the EWG are listed in the EWG Indicator Set, which identifies any support available as routes to employment for the vulnerable clients concerned. The group continues to play an active role in lobbying for residents and businesses any opportunities as routes to employment through the council's supply chain contracts.
- 5.3 The EWG Chairs have worked closely with Merton's Procurement Team and the council has implemented a Social Value Toolkit to provide guidance for officers undertaking procurement contracts. The Toolkit, policy and guidance document for suppliers (to be issued with contracting opportunities) has now been published on the Council's intranet. (See Recommendation 2)

6 TIMETABLE

The Action Plan was presented in January 2018 and the Panel requested an update in June 2018 and a further update after 6 months for the outstanding matters.

7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The proposals were made in the main with the expectation that the actions can be implemented using existing resources. However, there are financial implications to implement Recommendations 2, 5 and 6.
- 7.2 The Panel should note that the cost to cover salaries (circa £14k per apprentice) and any necessary financial support for the target groups is required to meet Recommendations 2 and 5.
- 7.3 Any changes to the way in which we procure which has a cost implication to the Council (as suggested under Recommendation 6) will need to go to Procurement Board for approval prior to being considered by any other panel / forum.
- 7.4 The funding for the Towards Employment Pilot will cease soon and officers are seeking opportunities to continue the scheme due to its success.

8 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The council has extensive legal duties with regard to LAC and care leavers.

9 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Supporting these vulnerable groups into employment is in line with the Council Human Rights, Equalities and community cohesion requirements. The Council acts as the corporate parent for looked after children and care leavers and as

such has a responsibility to provide parental guidance in seeking and obtaining employment.

10 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Reducing unemployment can lead to the reduction in crime.

11 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

12 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

12.1 Appendix 1 - CYPOS Panel's Action plan: vulnerable cohorts into employment – June 2018

12.2 Appendix 2 – Towards Employment Case Study

13 BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 CYPOS Panel's Corporate Parenting Report found [here](#)

13.2 CYPOS Panel's monitoring of the recommendations made by the task group on routes into employment for vulnerable young people which you can view [here](#) (February 2017)

13.3 CYPOS Panel's Action plan: vulnerable cohorts into employment task group recommendations report found [here](#) (January 2018)

13.4 CYPOS Panel Action Plan: vulnerable cohorts into employment task group recommendations report found [here](#) (June 2018)