

**Meeting date:** 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022

**Report to:** Health and Wellbeing Board

**Subject/report title:** Employment and Skills Support

**Report from:** Ruth Tennant – Director of Public Health

**Report author/lead contact officer:** Rachel Egan – Head of Inclusive Growth

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**Wards affected:**

- All Wards |  Bickenhill |  Blythe |  Castle Bromwich |  Chelmsley Wood |  
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath |  Elmdon |  Kingshurst/Fordbridge |  Knowle |  
 Lyndon |  Meriden |  Olton |  Shirley East |  Shirley South |  
 Shirley West |  Silhill |  Smith's Wood |  St Alphege
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**Public/private report:** Public

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**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1** To update the Health and Wellbeing Board on Employment and Skills activity delivered by the Council, particularly in supporting our more vulnerable residents and contributing to health and wellbeing.

**2. Decision(s) recommended**

- 2.1** To consider how the Employment and Skills team is developing and enhancing its services to ensure that residents are able to access opportunities and are supported to overcome barriers to employment, particularly in relation to health and wellbeing.

**3. Matters for Consideration**

**3.1 Background**

- 3.2** The Employment and Skills team moved to the Public Health Directorate in December 2019 as part of the strategic shift towards a more integrated health and wellbeing offer to address the inequalities and barriers faced by unemployed residents, taking into account the wider determinants of health.

- 3.3** Despite the impact of Covid, which saw a spike in levels of claimant unemployment which is still above pre-pandemic levels, analysis of the local labour market highlights

the relatively strong labour market position of the Borough. However this is set against the continued challenges in the north of the borough and amongst specific groups of residents, notably sustained high claimant unemployment amongst young people in North Solihull, (currently 12.9% compared to Solihull average of 6% and England average of 5%), and an increasing number of residents who are looking for work and declare a disability or health condition; 35% of the young people age 29 and under that the service work with self-declare a disability, and 36% of our over 30 cohort declare a disability.

## **Current Service offer**

### Universal and Targeted support

- 3.4** Through a range of externally funded projects, the Council's Employment and Skills Service offer employment support for unemployed jobseekers, and inactive residents (those who may, or not claim benefits but are not required to look for work or be ready to start work). There is intensive and specialised support for those who are more vulnerable, and partners are selected to deliver alongside the team based on their expertise in helping people with learning disabilities, managing mental health, and supporting wellbeing and confidence building.
- 3.5** Young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) are a key group that we focus on as part of our overall approach to improving life chances, reducing health inequalities and the broader 'levelling up' agenda, in order to prevent long term unemployment and associated economic, social and health related impacts.
- 3.6** In 2021-2022, the team and partners engaged with 643 new customers and registered them onto our employment support projects. Of these 643, 335 were NEET young people age 16-29.
- 3.7** During the same period, a total of 169 individuals were supported into employment, 103 of these were young people. A further 34 were supported into education or training, 22 of these were young people.
- 3.8** Whilst the majority of the support is focused on unemployed people, preventative work is also just as important. The team delivers a project targeted at those who are at risk of becoming NEET which concentrates on delivering to students in schools and colleges who are in danger of not progressing onto, or completing, their Key stage 4 or 5 education pathway.
- 3.9** 56 young people (a subset of the 643 new customers) were engaged onto this project last year, with a further 84 who the team are supporting and are not yet fully registered.
- 3.10** The post 16 tracking service is a key part of the Employment and Skills Team with close working across the services supporting data collection and fast referrals to programmes to ensure that young people are contacted and offered support very quickly if they are identified as NEET or at risk of NEET. Direct referrals from teams working with young people who are care experienced, at risk of offending, or with special educational needs (SEND) is encouraged and promoted.

### Delivery models

- 3.11** The Employment and Skills delivery team are based out of the Solihull Recruitment and Training Centre (SRTC) in Chelmsley Wood Town Centre. When engaging with customers, the team encourage face to face support where possible, in order to build up a good working relationship with the people that they are supporting. As far as possible each customer has a named contact who will be the person that always supports them. A satellite centre in The Core, is opening in late May to support customers who live in South Solihull.
- 3.12** Partners and organisations are encouraged to co-locate at the centre to offer a joined up service for customers. Delivery partners meet customers at the centre to offer support to those with poor mental health and autism, whilst other services such as smoking cessation, weight management, and organisations offering Individual Placement Support (IPS) work in the centre regularly. The centre is also a 'Youth Hub', which means Job Centre Plus staff work out of the centre for four days each week, referring young unemployed people to employment support as quickly as possible.
- 3.13** The Youth Hub at the Recruitment and Training Centre was officially launched in May 2022, by the West Midlands Mayor, Andy Street. Since re-opening to the public in July 2021, the centre has had over 1,500 visitors, and 90 young people have been supported into employment or training.
- 3.14** Employer Engagement is also a key part of delivery. In addition to a general offer to businesses to help them to fill vacancies, a supported employment function acts as a broker between the people that we are supporting and local business, 'reverse marketing' candidates with additional needs to employers with vacancies, offering support to both, to ensure that the role is suitable and that employment can be maintained. The Team encourages employers to achieve the 'Disability Confident' kitemark which encourages employers to think differently about disability and take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop people with disabilities.

### **Specialist Support**

- 3.15** We are strengthening partnership working through a clear approach to delivering specialist support and bringing together key colleagues in Employment and Skills, Adults and Children's services to develop joint working and local delivery arrangements.

### Learning Disabilities

- 3.16** The Team works in partnership with colleagues across the Council to create and support access to employment opportunities for local people with a learning disability. Three brand new Supported Internships with the Council have been created and recruited to in the current academic year, with the aim of renewing these placements and then increasing to a further three over the next year.
- 3.17** A strategy for the deployment of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) in Solihull is under development and we are working with Solihull College (as the primary delivery body) to maximise the impact of their AEB allocation. A priority for this year is offering more

flexible provision for residents with Learning disabilities, including exploring the potential to deliver a Supported Internship programme for those aged over 25.

- 3.18** The Council has also committed to creating new jobs within the Council for our residents with learning disabilities. This initiative will support performance against the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) target to increase the average employment rate for Adult Social Care service users for a primary reason of a learning disability (rate for Solihull was 3.6% or 15 people in 19/20 compared to the rate for statistical neighbours of 8.3%). The Council's recruitment process has been flexed to provide an initial work trial rather than an interview, to ensure that the job suits both the individual and the recruiting team. As of early May, one person has commenced employment in the Community Occupational Therapy team, two work trials for receptionists will start in mid-May ready for a June employment start, and a further six work trails are staggered over June and July. There are additional job pledges where suitable applicants need to be matched to jobs later in the year.
- 3.19** This priority will then be expanded throughout the next 12 months to work with other local employers, including our partners and contractors, to encourage them to consider offering paid employment or supported internships for local people with a learning disability.

## **Health and Social Care Workforce**

### Social Care

- 3.20** The employment and skills team are working closely with Adult Social Care and the wider Integrated Care System (ICS) on a range of projects to support the health and social care workforce. At a strategic level the Council has also published a workforce strategy and action plan to support the external care workforce in the borough around the areas of recruitment support, value and transport, and colleagues from the employment and skills team are integral to the planning and development of this programme.

### NHS Workforce

- 3.21** Through the ICS partnership, the team has led on the system design of a pilot project to offer permanent jobs across multiple NHS trusts to unemployed residents in Birmingham and Solihull (BSol), as part of on-going work around the role of the NHS as an 'Anchor Institution'. A targeted, ring-fenced process based around values and behaviours (rather than skills or experience) has enabled unemployed people to access job specific training and a guaranteed interview for roles in estates, clinical settings and administration. Across BSol, the I Can programme achieved the following in the first five months:
- (a) 1000+ people engaged after an initial sifting process
  - (b) 192 waiting for training, or already in training
  - (c) 103 jobseekers interviewed and accepted jobs
- 3.22** We will be building on this work to explore the potential for a system level approach to supporting recruitment into social care jobs, starting with vacancies in Care Homes throughout summer 2022

## **Next Steps/ Future activity**

- 3.23** Having identified that many of our customers are suffering with poor mental health, we are working with our staff to undertake an informal skills assessment of their confidence in working with customers with mental health conditions, and how they refer into other support services. If identified as a training need, we will be developing a bespoke training package for staff to help them feel more comfortable in pursuing conversations with customers about their mental health
- 3.24** Within the Health Inequalities Strategy, an action has been identified to better understand the data we collect about our customers. Analysis is underway to look at the difference between the support required by people with disabilities compared to those who don't declare a disability, the impact of age and other barriers, and how pre-pandemic and post pandemic outcomes compare.

### **Supporting Health and Wellbeing through the Adult Education Budget Strategy**

- 3.25** As mentioned in 3.14 the Employment and Skills Team are working with Solihull College to develop an AEB strategy for Solihull. AEB funds training for those aged 19+ (or up to 25 for individuals with SEND) ranging from entry level skills such as Maths and English through to pre-employment training and some higher level skills up to level 4, as well as Community and Family Learning. The strategy will articulate key priorities for the next year with the following opportunities to contribute towards the health and wellbeing agenda:
- (d) Community and Family Learning – using fun and short activities as a hook to engage with adults who may be unemployed, with low or no skills or lacking clear career goals. Family learning activities will be promoted through schools and family community groups and will have defined pathways to promote more formal learning opportunities to adults in a friendly and supportive way.
  - (e) Using flexibility through the budget to increase training for adults with learning disabilities, with pathways to work experience and paid work
  - (f) Increasing young people's access to ICT through the provision of new laptops and digital skills training at the SRTC to improve employability and qualifications
  - (g) Ensuring health and wellbeing activities are a key element of family and community learning, linking to other services that promote good physical and mental health.

**4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?**

5. The actions outlined in the report are based on local experience of what works, best practise for employment and skills, the wider impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, national and regional policy and local economic drivers. They are designed to support the delivery of the Council Plan and wider plans, adding value rather than duplicating activity that is already taking place within the employment support landscape. It is anticipated that the scope and nature of the Council’s work on employment and skills will continue to evolve over time as new challenges and opportunities arise.

**6. Reasons for recommending preferred option**

The Employment and Skills programme provides the Council with a clear set of actions to pursue in addition to the wider activities of the Council that contribute to this agenda.

**7. Implications and Considerations**

**7.1** State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull.</li> <li>2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it.</li> <li>3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities.</li> <li>4. Enable communities to thrive.</li> </ol>	<p>Helping our more vulnerable residents with employment support to find work or training, ensuring our provision meets local need. Leading on system change to help residents consider opportunities they may not previously have accessed.</p>
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Develop and promote the borough’s economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres.</li> <li>6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2.</li> <li>7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable.</li> </ol>	<p>Activity supports local people to access employment opportunities created through UK Central and HS2. Supporting businesses with their recruitment and training packages.</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions.</li> </ol>	

Priority:	Contribution:
9. Promote employee wellbeing	Enter text.

## 7.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

Evaluation is integrated into our projects to gain customer feedback. Mid-term evaluation of our projects showed that customers like the personalised approach of our delivery model and like being part of a voluntary programme. Our footfall at the Recruitment and Training Centre is increasing month on month, showing a growing preference for customers to meet the team face to face following remote support.

## 7.3 Financial implications:

7.3.1 There are no significant or immediate financial implications, however, it should be considered that as European Social Fund ends in December 2023, the service is likely to change as budgets are reduced.

## 7.4 Legal implications:

7.4.1 Non directly arising from this report.

## 7.5 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

7.5.1 Whilst services delivered through externally funded contracts carry some risks, these are monitored regularly and escalated as necessary.

## 7.6 Equality implications:

7.7 The Employment and Skills Team has access to a range of data, from that captured on our own customer relationship management system and other reporting systems to the information shared by schools and colleges. The team is focussed on improving the quality of data captured and reported, particularly in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, to enable services and support to be targeted where it is needed most.

7.8 We are undertaking a piece of in-depth data analysis to understand the impact disability, and other barriers, has on our resident's ability to find work, with a view to improving overall outcomes and adapting the service as required.

## 7.9 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):

7.9.1 Continuing to improve our local supported employment model and targeted support for vulnerable groups will help us to set out our position in this area of work in readiness for future funding opportunities such as UK Shared Prosperity Fund, as well as potential co-commissioning with DWP through further devolution deals. Working closely with all three organisations is essential for Solihull to maximise funding, and opportunities for all residents

7.9.2 The Head of Inclusive Growth acts as the Senior Responsible Officer for Education, Employment and Skills for the ICS and champions this agenda within the People Board.

**8. List of appendices referred to**

8.1 N/A

**9. Background papers used to compile this report**

9.1 N/A

**10. List of other relevant documents**

10.1 Enter text.