

## **Briefing Note**

### **Communities and Partnership Scrutiny Committee**

#### **Select Committee – Supporting Young People into Education Training and Work**

At its meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2012, the Committee heard from the following people:-

- Ruth Ashwell – Oxfordshire County Council Youth Engagement and Opportunities Service Manager, Early Intervention – Children, Young People and Families;
- Sarah Burrows – Oxfordshire County Council - Manager of the East Oxford Hub;
- Riaz Ahmed – Chair of the Stanley Road Mosque;
- Khalid Shariff – SportsBox;
- Sharon Highton – CfBT Education Trust (Oxford Includes);
- Amir Hamza;
- Jawaid Malik.

#### **Key points and themes**

The following key points were made and themes identified:-

##### **1. Variations across the City**

NEET figures varied across the City, but it was important not to look just at figures but at percentages too. Some smaller wards had a higher percentage of young people who were NEET, even if they had fewer individuals.

##### **2 Relevance of educational attainment**

Young people with LDD (learning difficulties and disabilities) were more likely to become NEET than any other group. A pilot scheme at St Gregory's School sought to screen young people to assess who was most likely to become NEET. If successful, this would be rolled out across the City. There was concern that some young people might be removed from the LDD register – this increased the likelihood of a vulnerable young people being missed. It was important to pick up on issues early. Working with children as young as those in Years 7 and 8 provided much greater sustainable benefits.

### 3 Young people and work

A proportion of young people “bounced” in and out of jobs. Whilst not NEET in the conventional sense, they were not in settled work and tended to gain low paid and more unskilled work. Other young people held jobs for quite a time, and then were (for example) made redundant, but they were well equipped to find other work and confident about doing so. It should be kept in mind that there was a broad spectrum of young people who could be considered NEET, and that the period for which they were NEET could vary.

### 4 Importance of mentoring

The provision of positive role models and mentors for young people could make a real difference. More youth workers like Khalid Sharif, who lived amongst the community with which they worked, were needed.

### 5 Outreach work

Outreach work was important. It was also important to meet and interact with young people where they met, which could include outside “normal” working hours.

There is a cultural perspective to engagement and support. Consideration should be given to the use of Mosques, as effectively they are community centres. It is important that outreach work is linked in with the mainstream, and developed as a referral point.

### 6 Apprenticeships and work experience

There were apprenticeship schemes in Oxford, but the problem for many young people was that they were set at too high a level – for example, for people who already had a level 2 qualification. Lack of formal qualification was a barrier for many.

Young people’s views of work experience varied; some found it valuable, others less so. Most agreed that they wanted work experience that was paid, and preferably resulted in a permanent job.

The Fire and Rescue Service provided a dedicated 2 weeks per year of training in schools focussed on work skills and team work. This was very valuable and more schemes of this nature were needed.

## Gaps

### 1 Evidence from young people

The major gap identified by the Committee was that of gathering evidence directly from young people. One young person had attended the

meeting and been very helpful, but it was necessary to gather a wider range of views, and to go out and meet young people where they gathered.

## 2 Further information from the invited guests

The invited guests were asked the following:-

- *What do you think are the current barriers for young people, especially those who are NEET?.*
- *What one thing would you like the City Council to do in order to help alleviate the present situation?*

Information will be collated as it is received and circulated in due course.

## 3 Job Centre Plus

The Committee would like to talk with representatives from Job Centre Plus concerning their interaction with communities and the programmes that they have available.

### **Next Steps**

- 1 Councillors Campbell, Altaf Khan and Lloyd Shogbesan will jointly review the comments made at the meeting and prepare a list of key points for the rest of the Committee;
- 2 Officers to gather information from guests (in hand);
- 3 Gather together a list of agencies and individuals who work with young people in the City – help from the guests in its compilation would be welcome;
- 4 Arrange to meet with young people in order to gather more information from them.

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