

To: Communities and Partnership Scrutiny Committee

Date: 12th March 2012

Item No:

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

Title of Report: Select Committee – Supporting young people into education, training and work.

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To provide background and context to the Select Committee on the topic of supporting young people into education, training and work.

Lead Members: Councillors Lloyd-Shogbesan and Altaf Khan

Policy Framework: Strong and Active Communities

Introduction

- 1 Youth unemployment nationally has risen to worrying levels. According to a report produced in November 2011 for the Private Equity Foundation, it is estimated that 979,000 young people between the age of 16 and 24 are NEET – that is; “not in education, employment or training”. This represents 16% of the entire age group. 186,000 of these young people are aged 16 to 18.
- 2 For many young people, this will be a temporary state of affairs, but for others it can lead to long term difficulties in the labour market. Being NEET early in life may lead to lower wages and higher chances of unemployment later in life. That is why it is important to address the problem of NEETs early on.
- 3 There is no single definition of whom or what is NEET. The Government definition focuses on 16-18 year olds who have recently left school, and who have not entered either employment or further training. The Private Equity Foundation, in its report, believes that the broader definition of 16-24 year olds captures more accurately the youth to labour market transition.

A copy of the Private Equity Foundation's report "Off the map? The Geography of NEETs" is attached as **Appendix A**

The Oxford Perspective

- 4 Oxford is a city with low NEET levels. Less than 10% of its young people between the ages of 16 and 24 are defined as NEET. Oxford is classed as a prosperous city in the south east of England, and its NEET level can be contrasted favourably with other places. Grimsby, for example, has NEET levels which are very high at almost 25% of young people between 16 and 24. Swansea has NEET levels of around 20%, while Bristol, Luton, Southampton and Milton Keynes have NEET levels of 10%.
- 5 Although Oxford's NEET levels are low, there some wards and groups for whom the figures are significant. A list of NEET clients by ward (as at 2nd February 2012) is below – highest numbers are highlighted:-

Ward	Number of NEET clients
Barton and Sandhills	51
Blackbird Leys	50
Carfax (inc Holywell)	16
Churchill	18
Cowley	16
Cowley Marsh	16
Headington	7
Headington Hill & Northway	10
Hinksey Park	9
Holywell (already inc in Carfax)	1
Iffley Fields	18
Jericho and Osney	5
Littlemore	33
Lye Valley	17
Marston	11
North	1
Northfield Brook	52
Quarry and Risinghurst	16
Rose Hill and Iffley	34
St Clement's	18
St Margaret's	2
St Mary's	21
Summertown	16
Wolvercote	14
TOTAL	452

- 6 Wards with higher levels of NEETs tend to have higher numbers of young people claiming Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA). The number of people who are unemployed is actually larger than the numbers claiming JSA, because not all unemployed claimants are eligible for it; and of course some choose not to claim it. The Council uses JSA as an indicator of the level of unemployment because available quickly and is precise.
- 7 Number of young people (aged 18-24) claiming JSA by ward (highest numbers highlighted again):-

Ward	JSA claimants
Barton and Sandhills	55
Blackbird Leys	75
Carfax	25
Churchill	20
Cowley	30
Cowley Marsh	25
Headington	20
Headington Hill & Northway	10
Hinksey Park	25
Holywell	0
Iffley Fields	35
Jericho and Osney	10
Littlemore	30
Lye Valley	30
Marston	15
North	5
Northfield Brook	60
Quarry and Risinghurst	20
Rose Hill and Iffley	40
St Clement's	15
St Margaret's	5
St Mary's	20
Summertown	10
Wolvercote	10
TOTAL (Rounded to nearest 5)	605

- 8 By ethnicity and age group, young JSA claimants can be shown as follows:

	Aged under 18	Aged 18-24
White	10	420
Ethnic minority	0	160
Mixed	0	30
Asian or Asian British	0	60
Black or Black British	0	50
Chinese or other ethnic group	0	20
Prefer not to say	0	10
Unknown	0	15
TOTAL	10	610

- 9 With this data in mind, the Communities and Partnership Scrutiny Committee established a small group tasked with setting up a Select Committee to explore issues around young people and work. The Lead Members on this select committee are Councillors Lloyd-Shogbesan and Altaf Khan, and they have chosen to look at the means by which young people are, or can be, supported into education, training and work.

Further analysis of NEET data is attached as **Appendix B**

Select Committee Guiding Question

<p>10 To understand and review what organisations, agencies and the voluntary sector do to communicate with and support young people into education, training and employment. To consider data and evidence from young people and agencies concerning the effectiveness of these strategies.</p>

Select Committee focus and definition

- 11 The Select Committee will focus on young people who are NEET and long term unemployed. It will consider particularly young people in the African Caribbean and Pakistani communities.
- 12 Long term unemployment as defined by European Union statistics is “unemployment lasting for longer than one year.”
- 13 Unemployment (or “joblessness”) is defined by the International Labour Organisation as occurring “when people are without jobs, and have actively sought work, within the past 4 weeks.”

Issues

- 14 Some of the issues to be considered are:-
- Do we understand why some groups and areas are worse than others?
 - Are services and institutions focussed to provide the right support in the right place at the right time?
 - Do agencies work well together?
 - What is successful nationally and locally?
 - What is the experience of young people when looking for training and work?
 - What do young people perceive as barriers?
 - What do young people think of any support on offer to them?
 - Is there anything extra young people might like to see, and why?
- 15 Our eventual aim is to try to answer the guiding question and make recommendations through a Select Committee report to the City Executive Board and the various partnership bodies involved.
- 16 The following people will attend the meeting:-
- Ruth Ashwell – Oxfordshire County Council Youth Engagement and Opportunities Service Manager, Early Intervention, Children Education and Families;
 - One of the Early Intervention Hub managers will accompany Ruth Ashwell;
 - It is hoped that a representative of Job Centre Plus will also be able to attend (this still awaits confirmation);
 - Some young people will attend the meeting to talk about their experiences and ideas.
- 17 It should be noted that there is an active group (The NEET/NIL Action Group) within Oxford, of which Ruth Ashwell is the Chair, that is working very hard to tackle issues of young people who are NEET. The City Council's representative is Val Johnson. The group has produced an Action Plan that is attached as **Appendix C**

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