

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 9 June 2010

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director of Environment and Economy

SUBJECT: Barriers to Work Scrutiny Topic Group

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report on the findings and recommendations of the Barriers to Work Scrutiny Topic Group that was established to consider the Halton Neighbourhood Management Employment Focus Groups. Research was undertaken by Mott MacDonald MIS in 2008 on behalf of the Employment Learning & Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership.

2. RECOMMENDED: That

- 2.1 The key recommendations as detailed in Paragraphs 5.1 – 5.14 of the Scrutiny Topic Group are approved by the Policy & Performance Board and forwarded for consideration to the Executive Board at the next available meeting.**

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Halton Neighbourhood Management Employment Focus Groups Research was commissioned by the Specialist Strategic Partnership to help to better understand why worklessness is so high in the Neighbourhood Management Area priority Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) where worklessness is higher than 25%. The research was commissioned through the Merseyside Information Service. (The results of which are detailed in Appendix 1).

4. METHODOLGY

- 4.1 The Scrutiny Topic Group was established to analyse the results of the research, to understand them in some depth and to develop appropriate recommendations as to how local employment initiatives, training & skills programmes and business start-up services can be re-focussed to address the perceived barriers to employment identified by residents in the neighbourhood management areas that was captured by the research.
- 4.2 The Scrutiny Topic Group met on seven occasions between the period October 2008 and March 2010 and in order to assist with gathering evidence for the Key Recommendations a Partner Workshop was held on 25 March 2009 and an Employer Workshop was held on 22 October 2009. (A summary of both workshops are detailed in Appendix 2).

- 4.3 The Chair of the Scrutiny Topic Group and the Chair of the Healthy Halton Employment Scrutiny Topic Group, accompanied by the Head of Enterprise & Employment attended a National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) workshop at Lancashire County Council on 19 January 2010 to find out about the Apprentice Programme and Talent Pool that had been established by the County Council in partnership with NAS and Jobcentre Plus. (A summary of the Lancashire County Council models are attached at Appendix 3.)

5. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 There is generally a lack of understanding, particularly by employers, of the National Qualifications Framework and where qualifications that they may be familiar with sit within the new framework. The 14-19 Strategy Manager has re-produced an aide memoire for use by practitioners and to promote to employers. (A copy is attached at Appendix 4)
- 5.2 The 14-19 Partnership should examine the feasibility and costs associated with developing a Vocational Assessment Centre which allows the opportunity for secondary pupils to be introduced to the world of work much earlier in order to help them to make more informed curriculum choices for GCSE's or Diploma options.
- 5.3 Secondary school children should have access to more effective and impartial Information, Advice & Guidance which helps them to make more informed choices about career options, employment opportunities with learning, further or higher education.
- 5.4 There is recognition that the WNF Apprentice Support Project (APT4U) has led to the creation of significant new apprenticeships with local employers, however, a protocol for monitoring the progress of apprentices supported by the project should be developed and introduced.
- 5.5 The potential for the Council to act as lead organisation in establishing a Group Training Association to coordinate and promote more apprenticeships across all employing organisations in the borough should be vigorously explored with the National Apprenticeship Service.
- 5.6 The Apprenticeship Corporate Working Group should examine the feasibility of introducing a two year Council Apprenticeship Programme along the lines of the best practice models that have been identified by the Scrutiny Topic.
- 5.7 That Care Leaver and NEET apprentice trainees on placements within Departments should be paid through the Council's payroll rather than via Jarvis Training Management Ltd and that the Terms & Conditions of Traineeship drawn up by HPIJ and Legal Services should be introduced and issued to all apprentice trainees without any delay.
- 5.8 The feasibility and costs associated with the Council introducing the Prince's Trust Team Challenge, a personal programme for young employees aged 16-24 years provided by Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service should be explored.
- 5.9 The Corporate Agency Working Group should examine the potential cost savings of utilising Halton People into Jobs to develop Council

employment initiatives, similar to those models that have been identified by the Scrutiny Topic Group which could significantly reduce the requirement for agency staff, including the feasibility of HPIJ establishing a bank of casual workers paid directly through the Council payroll system to be deployed as appropriate in Council Departments.

- 5.10 That external Council vacancies should routinely be advertised via Halton People into Jobs in order to open up and improve the access to jobs in the Council for local residents.
- 5.11 That an Officer/Member working group be established to examine the Council's recruitment practices to determine if they are open and accessible to local people from under represented groups i.e. young people that are NEET, those leaving care, disabled people, carers and lone parents. If the recruitment practices are found to be less accessible, the working group should develop and promote positive action procedures to open up access to jobs and encourage recruitment from such groups.
- 5.12 A review of the effectiveness of the Council's Corporate Parenting Strategy and Employment Policy for Care Leavers should be undertaken.
- 5.13 The potential of creating more local jobs through the Council Procurement Strategy should be explored - recommend that a Scrutiny Topic Group be established to address this issue.
- 5.14 Explore the potential of securing funding post 31st March 2011 to continue to provide the very successful Enterprising Halton Business start up Programme to support new businesses that create additional jobs and offer new apprenticeships for local residents.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The worklessness & skills agenda is a key priority within the Corporate Plan, the Local Area Agreement/Multiple Area Agreement and is the cornerstone of the sub regional Liverpool City Region Employment Pathfinder Programme in which the Council is a strategic partner.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 No other implications.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

8.1 Children and Young People in Halton.

The work of the Scrutiny Topic Group has included a review of the NEET (not in education employment or training) provision and that available to young people leaving care that is available within the borough. Many of the perceived barriers cited in the research by young people from our most deprived areas will be the same as those which affect all young people growing up in Halton.

8.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton

The work of the Scrutiny Topic Group has enabled a review of how effective local employment initiatives are perceived by residents, partners and employers.

8.3 A Healthy Halton.

Poor health and disability were clearly identified by the focus groups as a real barrier to work. The need to develop a better coordinated and more effective response to help disabled people and those with health conditions to gain and retain employment.

8.4 A Safer Halton

The potential for improved access to employment and learning provision for young people may have a positive influence on youth anti social behaviour.

8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

No implications identified at this time.

9.0 RISK ANALYSIS

9.1 The findings and recommendations of the Scrutiny Topic group if accepted and implemented will provide an opportunity to open up access to jobs and skills, improve employment prospects and help to address the worklessness agenda in the borough.

10. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

10.1 The review of employment and skills provision by the Scrutiny Topic Group will impact on equality and diversity issues by improving access to employment opportunities by under represented groups within the community.

11. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT

11.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

Contact Officer

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Halton Neighbourhood Management Employment Focus Groups Summary

Introduction

Mott MacDonald MIS were commissioned by Halton Borough Council to undertake an exploratory study to find out why unemployment persists in certain areas of Halton, despite various Government Initiatives to reduce unemployment in those areas.

Methodology

Eight focus groups were carried out with unemployed residents across Halton to gather qualitative data on their knowledge and experiences of the New Deal Programme, where they go for support in finding work, their perceived barriers to working and factors that would encourage them to work.

Finding work

Participants discussed where they have gone to get help in finding work. They mentioned:

- Halton People Into Jobs
- Job Centre
- Action for Employment (A for E)
- Crosby training
- Employment Agencies
- Connexions
- Youth Centres
- Counsellors
- Lighthouse Foundation
- Shaw Trust
- Link Up

Attitudes to working

Most of the participants maintained that they would like to work. The benefits of working they described included:

- Pride
- Motivation
- Sense of worth
- Financial benefits
- The social aspect

Self employment

Overall, most participants did not feel that being self employed was an option for them due to the record keeping and accounting involved, start up costs and the lack of job security.

Type of Work

Participants hoped to get the following types of work:

- Legal administration, clerical/Office work/reception
- Retail
- Plastering
- Parks and garden work
- Hospital porter work
- NVQ Assessors
- Work with O2
- Paramedic
- Hairdressing
- Holiday rep.

- Work with young offenders/probation
- Agricultural/ranger/parks and gardens
- Work with children/Nursery nurse
- Tiling
- Pub landlady
- Sales and marketing
- Computer engineering
- Security
- IT
- Railways repair
- Training
- Engineering Customer service
- Building/Construction
- Factory work
- Jobs dealing with people
- Warehousing and production
- HGV/Truck/lorry driving
- Homeless people/Drug and alcohol problems/Care work

Barriers to Working

Participants discussed reasons why they are prevented from working and finding Work:

- **Low minimum wage**

Participants also maintained that they could not afford to work, because, with the cost of living, they would be worse off financially if they worked than if they stayed on benefits. They claimed there is no financial incentive for working.

- **Lack of Support**

Some felt that they did not receive any support in finding work.

- **Lack of Jobs in Local Area**

The group complained that there is a lack of work locally, within a reasonable travelling distance from their homes. They explained that there is a Job Centre rule that they should be able to travel one and a half hours each way to work and back but they thought this was unrealistic, especially if they have to pay for childcare.

- **Cost of Travel**

They further commented that the cost of travelling to and from work and work placements is a barrier to working. They argued that they are limited to searching for jobs in certain areas due to the cost of travel. It was explained that on some work placements, travel expenses can be refunded if they are paid and claimed back but that it is difficult to pay in the first place.

- **Public Transport**

Furthermore, in relation to travel, the participants maintained that there is inadequate public transport in their area and this has an effect on what jobs they can get to, what time they can reasonably get there and how long they have to travel for.

- **Lack of Driving Licence**

Participants felt that not being able to drive was a barrier to working because it is more difficult to get to work and also, many jobs require you to have a driving license.

- **Lack of Experience**

Participants felt that their lack of experience was impeding their search for a job. They maintained that placements are supposed to address this issue but they are so often provided in the wrong field of work that they do not succeed in affording participants with valuable experience after all.

- **Health issues/disability**

Due to health considerations, some participants could not perform certain jobs.

- **Fear of interviews/lack of confidence**

Some participants felt that they lacked the confidence to find a new job after being made redundant and others lacked the confidence or grew nervous at interviews.

- **Age**

Participants in a number of groups felt that their age was a barrier.

- **Childcare/family commitments**

Finding jobs that fit around children was seen as difficult by participants. They complained that it is not easy to find childcare that provides care in the evenings or weekends. Furthermore, some felt that it is difficult to leave their children with a childcare provider as their children's behaviour changes if they are put in childcare and they have guilt associated with leaving their child and not spending enough time with them.

- **Criminal record**

Some participants felt that their criminal record is a barrier to finding work. They felt there should be more support for people with criminal records.

- **Stigma of a YMCA address.**

Participants in the Runcorn YMCA group felt strongly that they were stigmatised for living at the YMCA. They argued that employers do not want to interview them or offer them a job when they see they are living at the YMCA.

- **Lack of relevant jobs**

Participants complained that there is a lack of jobs in the area they would like to work in or are trained in. One participant had been on a course with the Social Partnership, to train to be a community worker, working with people with drug and alcohol issues. He commended this course; however, there are reportedly no jobs in that area. The Job Centre has since advised him that he needs to widen his search to encompass further types of jobs but he has been trained in a particular field and wants to work in that field.

- **Illiteracy**

Participants did not feel there was enough support for people with literacy problems.

- **Lack of feedback**

It was also explained that it is very frustrating when the effort had been put in to apply for a job and employers do not even have the courtesy to reply to their application.

- **Lack of financial support**

Some participants felt that there is a lack of financial support or funding for interview clothes and licences and training required for certain jobs. One participant, in the Central Widnes Over 35 group, commented on the lack of financial support for buying interview clothes. She maintained that most of her clothes were casual and that it would not be possible to attend an interview in such clothing.

- **Lack of information about help that is available.**

Participants were not clear about what help they could access and how to access this help.

- **Lack of joined up thinking**

One participant had come off incapacity benefit and went onto job seekers allowance and was left without money for a period because the two departments did not correlate the information. He felt that if he had known that he could not simply transfer from one benefit to another he would not have come off incapacity benefit.

- **Immigrants**

Participants also complained that there are fewer jobs in their local area because there are many immigrants who are willing to work for less money who take their jobs.

Encouragement to work

Participants discussed what would encourage them to find work.

- **More qualifications**

Participants felt that it was important for them to be able to gain more qualifications, in order to get better jobs.

- **More training/skills**

Several participants were of the opinion that improving their skills or retraining would help them to get back into the workplace.

- **Voluntary work in the relevant field**

Participants felt that there should be more voluntary work organised, in the fields that people want to work in, to give them experience. They advocated help with training, and experience, to achieve the type of job they wanted to do rather than just any job.

- **More jobs in local area**

Participants stressed the need for having a job that is in an area that is accessible for them via public transport or walking, due to cost of travel.

- **Transport**

Many felt that they would need their own transport to get a job, as public transport is not always available at shift times.

- **More support and empathy**

Participants felt that staff at the Job Centre and other employment organisations should be more friendly and understanding of their plight.

- **More support for people on incapacity benefit**

Participants felt that there should be more support for those on incapacity benefit, as often they are just left alone and they should still be encouraged and assisted to find work.

- **Support to find jobs in relevant area**

Participants argued that they would like help to find jobs in the specific area they are interested in, not having to apply for any job. One participant commended Halton People into Jobs for searching for a job he would actually like.

- **More financial support**

They also advocated more practical financial help by way of milk tokens, food tokens, and free bus/rail pass/travel expenses.

- **Support when you sign off**

The participants advocated financial assistance when they sign off benefits as there may be a month period before they get paid from a new job.

- **Funding for self employment**

Funding for self employment would be useful for some participants.

- **Childcare**

Participants highlighted that with the 3 hour travelling distance that is expected of them, they will have to pay an extra 3 hours childcare, when they are not earning in those hours.

- **More flexible working patterns**

Participants called for more family friendly jobs.

- **Affordable wage/financial incentive to work**

Participants felt that in order to be better off working, the minimum wage needs to be increased or better paid jobs made available.

- **Support from local businesses**

Participants felt that local businesses should be more committed to training and providing experience. They felt that local businesses could be more supportive by offering paid training, placements and work trials and also being more relaxed on the experience they require.

- **Apprenticeships**

Participants advocated more apprenticeship schemes, regardless of age as many consider that they are too old for a traditional apprentice scheme but would still like to learn a trade.

- **More support and jobs specifically for older people**

Participants felt that older people may need more support to find jobs and some may need jobs with lighter duties because they may not be as fit as younger people and may have health issues.

- **Confidence building**

Participants in a number of groups advocated more help in building their confidence and interview techniques, in terms of returning to the workplace and taking part in interviews.

- **Access to the same information for everyone**

Participants felt that all job seekers should have access to the same information, such as placements, training, grants, other financial support, access to schemes etc. There was some confusion in some groups about what help was available and to whom.

- **Joined up/partnership thinking in relation to social initiatives**

Participants argued that areas are being regenerated, with new housing being built and community facilities, but the people living in them still have no jobs. They called for a more joined up way of looking at regeneration, where all social issues are addressed, health, housing, unemployment etc, with more jobs and more affordable housing.

Group Comments

The following section is just a sample of the comments that people made during the sessions.

- Positive aspects of the service :
- Regular meetings are good
- Providing benefits advice before you come off
- More informal meetings
- Being encouraged/getting training in something you want to do
- The HPiJ Charter course (motivation and skills)
- Paid job placements
- JCP job points easy to use
- Work trails
- Help with barriers e.g. disabilities
- Some people like websites

Not so good:

- Being trained where there are no jobs afterwards
- Not being trained in what I want to do
- Trained but then placed in an unrelated field
- Trained but no work experience
- Directing people to agency work
- Leaving people to fill in forms but literacy problems
- More training for some staff on CV preparation
- Have to use the phone in JCP
- Left on your own
- Long waiting times to see someone
- Staff do not have enough time to help
- Staff are simply processing claims
- Some just promote certain courses
- They do not listen to what you want to do
- Push people to apply for jobs not in the correct field
- Need more empathy
- Lack of privacy when talking to an advisor
- Job quality
- Minimum wage
- It all depends on how good the advisor is
- No cash incentive to take work placement so can be worse off after travel and food costs
- Placements 9 out of 10 do not get a job
- Lack of support on certain courses – just left to get on with it
- Connexions – lack of clarity who they help

Appendix 2

Barriers to Work Partner Workshop 25 March 2009

Summary of Table Workshops – barriers identified:

Table 1

- Poor confidence – with completing forms and sharing personal details
- Earlier interventions – it was suggested that the numbers of people in receipt of incapacity benefit are used to hide unemployment figures
- Segmented customer base – it was agreed that partners need to be smarter about the different customer bases to better support individuals and tailor services to meet their needs (i.e. where do they live, what benefit they receive)
- Identify priorities for the borough – JCP provide a universal (national) service, more flexible monies are available to tailor services (locally/regionally) to better meet demands (i.e. WNF/NWDA)
- How organisations communicate with individuals – this should be reviewed for those that do not regularly access mainstream services (i.e. carers, incapacity benefit claimants, individuals who receive pension credits)
- Budgetary confidence – need to consider the ability for individuals to manage budgets within the home and where needs be invest in this area
- Focus on moving from inactivity to activity – need to recognise the need for a longer journey i.e. voluntary work/learning to enable positive progressions towards employment
- Re branding of services – it is recognised that individuals may be reluctant to access JCP. Neutral territory is much more effective – are there organisations that can act as intermediary bodies for JCP?
- Don't rely on people coming to us – services need to be taken to the people
- Seek to address family issues – apposed to individual issues
- Need to raise aspirations of people
- Directory of services in the borough – to be accessed by all and kept updated

Table 2

- Lack of support – very little support to individuals under 6mths unemployed. Need to focus on newly unemployed/redundant workers to avoid growing numbers of long-term unemployed
- Referrals and signposting to services and support is only being done at mandatory stage – individuals not receiving advice about help when they first claim benefits/access JCP services are more likely to become long-term unemployed
- Services available need to be more flexible i.e. available at evenings/weekends
- Lacks of experience – previously placements sourced were anywhere and everywhere with very little emphasis on whether it was suitable for the individual. Now placements are sourced where there is the opportunity of a real job at the end
- Permitted work – can be used as a progression route for individuals who have a health condition
- Funding for employers – New Deal/ILM incentives used to move local people into local employment
- Fear of interviews – interviews need to be conducted by employers in a much more constructive and appropriate manner to avoid further damaging
- Lack of feedback - feedback is vital in order to help people improve their chances of gaining suitable employment
- Suggestion to involve employers in 'mock interview' days would be beneficial
- Support to be included throughout school (10-16yrs) to better prepare school leavers for the world of work

- Criminal records – lots of specialist support available to ex-offenders to help them apply for work, portraying their criminal record in a more positive way
- Employers need to be educated about offences/criminal records and the relevance of those for their vacancies
- Illiteracy – issues not being identified or addressed before individuals are mandatory referred to provision by JCP. There is lots of support currently available for Skills for Life issues
- Voluntary work – should remain voluntary and the reason for doing voluntary work should be the right reason i.e. to give something back, develop skills/experience. Mandatory referrals to voluntary sector is not voluntary and individuals are less likely to give back the sector
- More support for people on incapacity benefit – existing support should be more widely promoted i.e. 104 Linking Rule/Return to Work Credit/Pathways Support
- Joined up partner thinking – a good example used is that of HPIJ/Neighbourhood Management/Housing Associations working together to recruit and Neighbourhood Employment Officers – to be based within the community, knocking on residents doors and signposting to services available for those wanting to move into employment, learning or enterprise

Table 3

- Lack of jobs available – the decline in the number of vacancies available has impacted on the numbers of people securing employment
- Cost of travel – currently bus passes/advisor discretion fund available for transition into work. At what point does this stop and individuals have to be self-sufficient?
- Public Transport – access to some ‘employment hubs’ is limited as traditionally employees that already work there have own transport
- Driving Licenses – are there any schemes that fund driving licenses, aware that there is a scooter/moped scheme?
- Childcare/Family commitments – cost of childcare impacts on the ability to move into work particularly for Lone Parents. Childcare providers are not flexible enough to meet some individuals needs i.e. evenings/weekends. Work needed to be done with employers/children’s information services for employers to be more flexible/family friendly
- YMCA – historically there is a stigma attached to those accessing service available from the YMCA. Employers can make assumptions about prospective employees. YMCA is positively addressing lots of issues. Consider a name change?
- Immigration – EU Workers – stats show an influx of migrant workers to Halton. The perception is that generally this group of people are working below NMW and generally in TEMP factory/process roles. So are they just filling a gap locally were local people don’t want TEMP work, or are local jobs being taken?
- Qualifications – is it just a perception that people need qualifications, do employers value strong work ethics instead
- Training – individuals may not be aware of the vast and wide ranging support available because they are not being told i.e. Train 2 Gain/NVQ’s/Route Ways/Job Brokering/Apprenticeships
- Support in relevant areas – partnership work to meet individuals needs “joined up approach”
- Marketing if services – marketing of each others services is more effective than a huge marketing campaign
- Employer Matrix – Business 2 Business trading

In summary

- 1) Information should be communicated to individuals and employers at an appropriate level
- 2) Front line services need to be improved to the end customer to provide services at the earliest possible intervention
- 3) Consistent levels of information should be given to all customers
- 4) There is lots of support and provision in place to customers from day one of unemployment, people just need to be told about it to access it
- 5) A joined up approach needs to be taken to improve the life chances of local people wanting to move into learning, employment or enterprise
- 6) Services need to be taken to local people rather than relying on local people going to the services

Barriers to Work Employer Workshop 22 October 2010

Employers Attended

Carl Watson – Just Care (Domiciliary Care Contractor)
Phil Williams – The Financial Contact Centre (Call Centre)
Christine McLoughlin – Halton Housing Trust (RSL)
Jim O’Neil (SRS Recruitment Agency)

Introduction

Chair Cllr Eddie Jones / Gerry Fitzpatrick welcomed the group and gave background to PPB Scrutiny Group looking at Barriers to Work in Halton. Following on from focus groups conducted independently with local residents a partner event took place to further identify the perceived barriers that prevent people from moving off benefits into employment.

Employers were invited to give brief overview of the nature of work their business undertakes in Halton:

- 1) Carl Watson – set up Just Care after being made redundant. Domiciliary care agency carrying out many contracts including those for HBC
- 2) Jim O’Neill – gave background to contracts he has recruited for via Reed for HBC – Refuse Collection, Drivers, Norton Priory Country Garden Kitchen
- 3) Phil Williams – recently set up new call centre on Manor Park

Employers were invited to discuss or raise the barriers they had experienced with recruiting local residents:

Jim O’Neill (SRS)

- previously experienced difficulty getting employers to commit to funding CRB checks when recruiting local residents for specific roles
- feels that having a driving license makes people more employable
- believes that agency work now provides more of an opportunity to lead into permanent employment
- more recently has found that there is a far greater pool of employable people competing for job opportunities
- Cllr Howard highlighted that local employers use agencies to fill seasonal roles or posts where particular skills sets are required and this is increasingly done through recruiting individuals from Eastern Europe. SRS mainly recruit local residents and have now found particular skills shortages in Halton

Carl Watson (Just Care)

- recently struggled to recruit into vacant posts – trying to promote care as a career not just a job and wants to increase male to female ratio (10% male)

- 100% reliability in the care sector is vital – peoples lives depend on it and high levels of sickness are not tolerated
- large proportion of employees is on a part time contract, mainly female.
- previous experience is not essential is investment in training is priority
- some problems with retention – mainly people moving completely away from care, although care can be a relatively low paid job in Halton (£6.50ph opposed to national average of £10.50ph) Carl doesn't feel that money is the key factor in retaining employees
- he has used incentives such as mileage allowance to encourage drivers

Phil Williams (The Financial Contact Centre)

- feels that there is a supply and demand issue, less pay in Halton in comparison to some other areas
- location of business (Manor Park). Cllr Findon asked about accessibility particularly for those residents that live in Widnes. All staff use public transport and have to walk from Windmill Hill bus stop which is about 10/15 minute walk. In the winter months/dark nights this may prove to be more of an issue

Rate of pay

Cllr Findon asked would agency staff benefit from professional tax advice. The majority felt that this was not feasible for those on National Minimum Wage.

Gerry Fitzpatrick highlighted how HPIJ link into specialist advice available through JCP – better off calculations

Jim O'Neill has found that people are more open to lower rate of pay due to available tax credits etc

Training

Cllr's queried whether employers are committed to investing in training. Should pay be incremental as staff becomes more qualified?

- 1) Some employers highlighted that there is a lot of funding available for training via the Learning & Skills Council
- 2) Some employers have linked into communication/confidence building courses available through HPIJ/HEP. It has been a joy to see people leave the training with increased confidence and motivation

Apprenticeships

Discussion took place over the importance of apprenticeships in Halton. Gerry Fitzpatrick highlighted that the Annual Perception Survey sent out to 2,500 businesses identified that less than 10% of employers knew about apprenticeships or how to recruit an apprentice. HPIJ developed apprenticeship programme APT4U - £2,000 incentive to employers to recruit/train young person (NEET). Christine McLoughlin gave overview of the success of 5 local apprenticeships recruited via HHT.

Gerry highlighted increasing problems with graduates finding employment.

Employers were asked to summarise their experience of recruiting in Halton:

- 1) shortage of jobs has created a more employable pool of people
- 2) poor literacy/numeracy prevents people from getting through application process (support available through Adult Learning & Skills – community learning/Skills for Life provision)
- 3) lack of understanding about what qualifications actually mean i.e. equivalent levels
- 4) high business rates impacts on the ability to become self employed

Summary

Employers were asked to identify what they feel is important when recruiting:

Phil Williams:

- looks for someone who is willing to work, flexible and wants to get off benefits. Has the motivation to turn up to work on time and not look for any excuse not to turn up
- feels that employers should be asked what training needs are required before investing government money on training that is not beneficial
- employers should be asked what their recruitment needs are to tailor local projects
- low level basic skills has been common amongst applicants

Jim O'Neill:

- attitude is key – at the minute he has a hungry workforce
- link funding to training that would be beneficial
- redundant workers increasingly make up part of the employable pool

Carl Watson:

- looks for common sense at all levels
- communication skills are key – finds that some 18-23 year old struggle to hold a conversation. Communication training used to improve this key skill
- problems with recruiting due to the stigma attached to care work (particularly for males)

Christine McLoughlin:

- agrees that a 'can do' attitude is essential
- self motivation and drive and the desire to want to help customers is needed
- HHT have an aspiration and commitment to recruit locally
- Established links with HPIJ to access funding for training and support with recruitment needs/apprentices

Appendix 3

1. Lancashire County Council Apprentice Model

Background

1.1. Lancashire County Council employ over 43,000 people spread across a wide geographical area that encompasses 12 district Councils where there are both prosperous and deprived communities. The Council is the second largest employer after the NHS and serves many multi-cultural societies.

1.2. As a large employer LCC often finds it necessary to supplement its workforce with agency staff to cover short, medium and long term absences and also to fill temporary jobs. In 2007/8 LCC spent £8.1m on agency related staff costs. The agency staff used cover a wide spectrum of occupational areas, however a significant number have been in business administration, finance/IT and customer service.

1.3. LCC recognised that as a key employer in Lancashire and a corporate partner in the Local Area Agreement that it had the opportunity to support economic development and social inclusion priorities by redirecting work opportunities from agencies by directly recruiting staff.

1.4. The Corporate HR and Economic Development Departments worked together to develop an apprenticeship programme aimed at recruiting and training 50 apprentices to support the work of the business admin, finance and customer services teams based in the County Hall in Preston.

1.5. LCC Apprenticeship Programme

Apprentices are not supernumerary, they are recruited through open and competitive selection, are offered a two year training contract and paid entry level Scale 1/2 (£11,995p.a.) on starting work. Apprenticeships are open to candidates of all ages i.e. 16-60 years. A two year placement provides them with the opportunity to gain a breadth of experience within the organisation. Apprentices have access to:

- NVQ level 2 and/or level 3 training with LSC approved providers and in some cases level 4 training
- LCC's portfolio of corporate training
- a workplace supervisor/mentor that has been trained
- support from a nominated HR Apprentice Officer

1.6. LCC Approach to Apprenticeships

- converting eligible employees to apprentices (NVQ 2 & 3)
- vacancy management – all recruitment including requests for agency staff must go via HR to determine if there is an apprentice opportunity
- pre-employment workshops for interested candidates to prepare for interview selection process
- selection & appointment – normal recruitment criteria/qualifications must be satisfied

1.7. Reducing Worklessness - Work Preparation Programmes

In order to support economic development and social inclusion priorities LCC have piloted and introduced several work preparation initiatives that have complimented the Apprentice Programme.

- ***Future Horizons*** has been developed to provide young people that are NEET and care leavers that are on Entry 2 Employment LSC provision with the opportunity to gain an 8 week work experience placement within LCC for between 16 – 30 hours per week. Eligible trainees receive EMA (£30 per week). Trainees are given the opportunity to participate in pre-employment workshops aimed at helping them to apply for the Apprenticeship Programme.

- **Future Horizons+** is a bespoke pre-employment programme for care leavers to gain an extended period of paid work experience (LSC recommended training allowance £95 per week.) within LCC Departments of up to 12 months duration. Trainees are given extra support to gain pre-level 2 vocational qualifications and additional support to help them to compete for apprentice opportunities when they are advertised.
- **Work Start – Public Sector Work Trial** has been developed in partnership with Jobcentre Plus for JCP priority customers living in Lancashire i.e. lone parents, people with health conditions & disabilities claiming Income Support or Incapacity benefit, JSA 6 months+. Participants are offered 30 day work placement in LCC and receive a travel & subsistence allowance paid by JCP, at the end of the placement they are provided with a work reference and a certificate of completion.

Trainees that successfully complete the pre-employment programmes are given the opportunity to join the **Talent Pool** where they can apply for jobs that arise within LCC including temporary assignments through the contracted recruitment agency.

1.8. The Business Case.

During 2006/7, LCC recruited more than 80 apprentices through the programme and achieved savings of £569,000 on the previous year's agency spend. In 2008/9 the savings achieved on agency staff costs were in excess of £1m and more significant savings are anticipated in 2009/10. Since 2006 LCC has employed almost 400 apprentices, many of whom have progressed into sustainable employment with LCC. The HR Department now recruits apprentices across all Council Departments including teaching assistants, care workers, road workers, construction workers, motor vehicle and outdoor workers. The District Councils that make up LCC have adopted the model and are now starting to employ apprentices and to recruit through the corporate Talent Pool.

2. National Apprenticeship Service

2.1. The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) was launched in April 2009 as one of the successor organisation to the LSC and it has the remit to drive forward the Governments ambition for apprenticeships aiming to bring about a significant growth in the number of employers offering apprenticeships.

2.2 There are three types of apprenticeships:

- Apprenticeships (equivalent to 5 GCSE's at grades C and above) work towards work-based learning qualifications i.e. NVQ level 2, Key Skills Certificate (literacy, numeracy & ITC skills) and in most cases a relevant Technical Certificate which is knowledge based qualification such as a BTeC. Completion of an apprenticeship allows entry to an Advanced Apprenticeship.
- Advanced Apprenticeships (equivalent to 2 'A' level passes) work towards a work-based learning qualifications i.e. NVQ level 3, Key Skills Certificate (literacy, numeracy & ITC skills) and in most cases a relevant Technical Certificate which is a knowledge based qualification such as a BTeC. To start this programme entrants must have 5 GCSE's at grades C and above or have completed an Apprenticeship.
- Higher Apprentices work towards a work-based learning qualification i.e. NVQ level 4 and in some cases a knowledge based qualification such as a Foundation degree.

2.3. Apprentices can progress to higher education, including university degrees but university graduates and those with qualifications above level 4 are not eligible for apprenticeship support.

2.4. Several meetings have been held with NAS who are very keen to work in partnership with the Council to improve the numbers of employers in Halton that offer apprenticeships particularly to young people aged 16-18 and young people aged 19-24 that are NEET.

2.5. NAS are very impressed with the number of employer based apprenticeships that have been created through the WNF APT4U Project which provides employers with an apprentice recruitment incentive of £2,000. NAS are keen to explore how their funding could add value to the APT4U initiative, and they are particularly interested in increasing the number of apprenticeships offered by the Council and other public sector employers and hold up the

Lancs CC model as an example of best practice which won a National Apprentice Award in 2009.

2.6. In order to increase the take up of apprenticeships NAS are keen to develop Group Training Associations (GTA) which are funded collaborative initiatives involving groups of employers and/or training providers to develop joint apprenticeship programmes that operate across industrial sectors or geographical areas. Instead of contracting with a variety of individual apprentice providers, NAS would passport the apprenticeship funding (£7,500 per apprentice place on average) to the GTA who would either directly deliver the apprenticeships or broker with existing apprentice providers to deliver the apprentice frameworks to meet the needs of employers.

2.7. NAS are very keen to explore the potential for the Council to become a geographical based GTA in Halton that would broker the delivery of apprenticeships to both private and public sector organisations. Should there be support for such a proposal an outline business case will be worked up.

Appendix 4

National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

Qualification Level	What an employer can expect from this level of Qualification	Qualifications that are accredited to this level
Entry Level	<p>basic knowledge and skills</p> <p>ability to apply learning in everyday situations</p> <p>not geared towards specific occupations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry level certificates • Skills for Life at entry level • Functional Skills at entry level
1	<p>basic knowledge and skills</p> <p>ability to apply learning with guidance or supervision</p> <p>may be linked to job competence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSEs grades D-G • BTEC Introductory Diplomas and Certificates • OCR Nationals • Key Skills level 1 • Functional Skills level 1 • NVQ level 1 • Skills for Life • Foundation Diploma - equivalent to five GCSEs at grades D to G
2	<p>good knowledge and understanding of a subject</p> <p>ability to perform variety of tasks with some guidance or supervision</p> <p>appropriate for many job roles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSEs grades A*-C • BTEC First Diplomas and Certificates • Apprenticeships – equivalent to five GCSEs at grades A* to C • OCR Nationals • Key Skills level 2 • Functional Skills level 2 • NVQ level 2 • Skills for Life • Higher Diploma - equivalent to seven GCSEs at grades A* to C
3	<p>ability to gain or apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding, at a detailed level</p> <p>qualified to enter higher education</p> <p>can work independently, or in some cases supervise and train others in their field of work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A levels • Advanced Extension Awards • Advanced Apprenticeships – equivalent to 2 A levels • GCE in applied subjects • International Baccalaureate • Key Skills level 3 • NVQ level 3 • BTEC Diplomas, Certificates and Awards • BTEC Nationals • OCR Nationals • Advanced Diploma - equivalent to 3½ A levels • Progression Diploma – equivalent to 2 A levels

Qualification Level	What an employer can expect from this level of Qualification	Qualifications that are accredited to this level
4	<p>specialist learning, involving detailed analysis of a high level of information and knowledge in an area of work or study</p> <p>appropriate for people working in technical and professional jobs, and/or managing and developing others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Skills level 4 • NVQs • BTEC Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards • Certificates of Higher Education
5	<p>ability to increase the depth of knowledge and understanding of an area of work or study, so you can respond to complex problems and situations</p> <p>involves high level of work expertise and competence in managing and training others</p> <p>appropriate for people working as higher grade technicians, professionals or managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HNCs and HNDs • NVQs • BTEC Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards • Bachelors Degrees • Foundation Degrees • Diplomas of HE and FE
6	<p>a specialist, high-level knowledge of an area of work or study, to enable you to use your own ideas and research in response to complex problems and situations</p> <p>appropriate for people working as knowledge-based professionals or in professional management positions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards • Bachelors Degrees with Honours • Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas
7	<p>highly developed and complex levels of knowledge, enabling you to develop original responses to complicated and unpredictable problems and situations</p> <p>appropriate for senior professionals and managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards • Masters Degrees • Postgraduate Certificates • Postgraduate Diplomas
8	<p>opportunity to develop new and creative approaches that extend or redefine existing knowledge or professional practice</p> <p>appropriate for leading experts or practitioners in a particular field</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctorates

The Qualification and Curriculum Framework (QCF)

The QCF will replace the NQF and awarding bodies are currently in the process of transferring qualifications into the new framework. The QCF is a new way of recognising skills and qualifications. It does this by awarding credit for qualifications and units (small steps of learning). It enables people to gain qualifications at their own pace along flexible routes.

How will the QCF help me understand the qualifications system?

At present, it is hard to understand all the different types of qualification that learners hold - what level they are, how long they take to complete, what content they cover, and how they compare to other qualifications. The new framework will help present qualifications in a way that is easy to understand and measure.



Credit and level

Every unit and qualification in the framework will have a credit value (one credit represents 10 hours, showing how much time it takes to complete) and a level between Entry level and level 8 (showing how difficult it is).

There are three sizes of qualifications in the QCF:

- Awards (1 to 12 credits)
- Certificates (13 to 36 credits)
- Diplomas (37 credits or more).

In the new framework you can have an award at level 1 or an award at level 8. This is because the qualification type 'award, certificate, diploma' represents the size of a qualification, not how difficult it is. Each qualification title contains the following:

- the level of the qualification (from Entry level at the bottom to level 8 at the top)
- the size of qualification (award/certificate/diploma)
- details indicating the content of the qualification.

Simply by looking at the title of a qualification you will be able to see how difficult it is, how long it will take the average learner to complete, and its general content. To understand the level of difficulty of the units and qualifications in the new framework it might be helpful to know that GCSEs (grade A*- C) are level 2, GCE A levels are level 3 and a PhD is a level 8. Knowing this can help to position the difficulty and challenge of each level in the framework.