

Gloucester City Council

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TASK AND FINISH GROUP

**ON EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS OPPORTUNITIES
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN GLOUCESTER**



FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Section 1 – Introduction

Background

On 14 September 2015, Gloucester City Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned a Task and Finish Group study in employment and skills.

The Task and Finish Group was formed in November 2015 specifically to look at employment and skills opportunities for young people in Gloucester. The report details the purpose and process of the review, the Task and Finish Group's findings, and its recommendations.

The Task and Finish Group based its findings on interviews with Witnesses and the examination of various factual pieces of information. The Group had planned to interview some young persons, but because of the short time available to complete the study it was only possible to gather a limited amount of anecdotal evidence.

Membership

The following cross-party Members took part in the study:-



Councillor Phil McLellan
Chair



Councillor Andy Lewis



Councillor Laura Pearsall



Councillor Neil Hampson

The Group was supported by the Council's Economic Development Manager, Angela Presdee, and Sonia Tucker, Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny Support).

Section 1 – Introduction (continued)

Terms of Reference (as defined in the scoping document shown in Section 2 of this report)

The agreed **ambitions** for the review were:-

'To identify barriers to young people reaching their potential'

The **anticipated outcomes** for the review were set as:-

- Barriers to young people reaching their potential will be identified.
- Gloucester's position as compared to other districts in the County will be explored.
- Employers' skills gaps will be identified.
- Employers will be better informed on what trainees in the City have to offer.
- Potential opportunities for the City Council to assist will be explored including working in partnership and joining in careers events.



Section 2 – Scoping of Study (the Terms of Reference)

SCRUTINY REVIEW – ONE PAGE STRATEGY	
Broad topic area	Employment and Skills Councillors Phil McLellan (Chair), Neil Hampson, Laura Pearsall
Specific topic area	Looking at employment and skills opportunities for young people
Ambitions for the review	To identify barriers to young people reaching their potential
How do we perform at the moment?	It's not clear that we are giving young people the skills they need and there are barriers to them reaching their potential. Are wage rates generally lower in the City than elsewhere in County? Do we need to attract high skills employers? Do we need to consider some of the barriers that may impact or play a part such as skills gaps; inconsistency with careers guidance and support; education and training provision aligning to meet the needs of local businesses; poor supply and quality housing and lack of affordable homes?
Who should we consult?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gfirst Local Economic Partnership and Gfutures • Gloucestershire County Council (Peter Holmes) • JobCentrePlus • Other colleagues within the Council • Gloucestershire College • G15 • A few local training providers (such as Prospect Training, Bridge Training, Arriva Training) • Employers in the City • Representatives from the Small and Medium Enterprises Group and the Federation of Small Businesses
Background information	Gloucestershire Strategic Economic Plan & Gloucestershire Skills Statement http://www.gfirstlep.com/gfirst-LEP/Our-Priorities/Our-Vision/ Gloucester City Council Corporate Plan Gloucestershire County Council Youth Employment Skills Strategy http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/article/111644/Skills-and-jobs
Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of the Council's Economic Development Team • Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny Support)
How long will it take?	3 months. To be concluded by the end of February 2016.
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barriers to young people reaching their potential will be identified. • Gloucester's position as compared to other districts in the County will be explored. • Employers' skills gaps will be identified. • Employers will be better informed on what trainees in the City have to offer. • Potential opportunities for the City Council to assist will be explored including working in partnership and joining in careers events.

Section 3 - Summary of Current Position

The Task and Finish Group was formed to identify barriers to young people reaching their potential and to look at ways of overcoming these barriers.

The Group believed that following the dismantling of the Careers Service there were inconsistencies in the advice being given to young people with some schools providing better direction than others. This was later corroborated by discussions with Witnesses and anecdotal evidence supplied by the Task and Finish Group Members themselves.

It appeared that there were less highly skilled employers in the City with a greater proportion of employees in the City being paid lower level wages than in other parts of the County. The Group was interested in looking at what could be done to encourage more highly skilled employers to Gloucester.

It was not clear that the courses offered by colleges and training organisations necessarily matched the demands of local businesses and this was something that the Group would explore during the study.



In terms of apprenticeships, the Group recognised that many local employers including Gloucester City Council had a good track record of offering placements, many of which had led to trainees securing jobs within the City Council or with other organisations. The Group considered that there were still not enough apprenticeships on offer in the City. Additionally, some schools did not cite apprenticeships as a route in their careers advice and were focused on encouraging young people to take the University route.

The Group was also aware that some young people dropped out of training schemes and wanted to understand the reasons why.

Other factors such as the poor housing and the shortage of affordable homes would also be examined during the study, as barriers to young people finding and securing jobs.

Section 4 – Findings

Introduction

This section summarises the discussions held at the Task and Finish Group meetings and the actions and outcomes which were identified during these meetings.

Meeting 1 – 25 November 2015

The Group discussed the background to the study and agreed the scope of the project by completing a one page document which set out the ambitions for the review and its anticipated outcomes.

Outcomes from meeting held on 25 November 2015

- The Group identified a variety of Witnesses who would be invited to future meetings. These included representatives from Job Centre Plus, training organisations and from small businesses. The views of the G15 partnership of secondary schools, Milestone School and Gloucestershire College would be sought and colleagues from the County Council would be asked to participate.

Meeting 2 – 13 January 2016

The Group welcomed the following Witnesses:-

- Peter Holmes, Head of Extended Learning, Gloucestershire County Council
- Maeve Maxwell, Project Officer, Yes2Jobs Campaign and G15 Partnership

What did the Group Learn from the Witnesses?

1. The 'Yes2Jobs' campaign was a successful cross-party initiative set up by Gloucestershire County Council 4 years ago which sought to promote and prepare young people for the workplace.
2. A fractured careers advice service and guidance resulted in some young people not getting the impartial advice they needed in schools, with some schools performing better than others. Schools had not been given extra funding to provide advice. The County Council, 'Yes2Jobs' and 'Grow Gloucestershire' had collaborated to produce a booklet 'What's Next?' which was targeted at and posted to 14-16 year olds. Some schools appeared to only be interested in encouraging pupils in a University route and did not spotlight vocational training or apprenticeships.

Section 4 – Findings (continued)

Meeting 2 – 13 January 2016

3. The Group was advised to consider participation in events such as the 'Skills Fest' and the potential to organise a local 'Ambitions' event.
4. There was a higher proportion of NEETS (a young person who is no longer in the education system and who is not working or being trained for work) in Gloucester and it was difficult to track these individuals once they had left school. Whilst support was available via the County Council's Youth Support Team, this was an area that could benefit from further partnership working and better co-ordination.
5. Reference was made to the University of Gloucestershire's 'GROW' initiative which aimed to reach out to schools to raise participation rates in higher education.
6. The 'GROW' Awards also showcased and recognised the talents of young people.



7. With the upturn in the economy, many young people found it easier to obtain employment, but there was concern for vulnerable young people who often found it difficult to access the jobs market because of personal issues. These were the individuals who were difficult to engage with. An EU funded project was being developed that would provide additional targeted support to help these young people. The County Council and Gloucestershire College had worked together on 'Supported Internships' which was a national initiative. One of the successful outcomes was a partnership with a local hotel chain who had supported young people and given them the confidence to work. This had resulted in work experience opportunities and in some young people securing work afterwards.
8. Some local training providers and Gloucestershire College offered a broad range of more vocational type training and the Military Preparation College (MPCT) sought to recruit young people into military organisations which had proved successful.

Section 4 – Findings (continued)

Meeting 2 – 13 January 2016

9. In terms of apprenticeships, Gloucester employers had a good track record providing apprenticeship placements, particularly in traditional industries such as manufacturing and construction.



Additionally, local training companies and Gloucestershire College performed well in offering apprenticeships. Gloucester City Council's own Apprenticeship Scheme was commended.

However, demand for all these placements outstripped the opportunities available.

The impact of the introduction of the Government's Apprenticeship Levy was considered

10. The good work of the G15 partnership of secondary schools, Milestone School, and Gloucestershire College, was explored. It was noted that G15 had worked with a local training provider and the County Council to create and deliver a successful 'Inspiring Enterprise' programme which showcased the entrepreneurial and enterprising skills of 16 individuals.
11. It was no longer mandatory for work experience placements to be organised by schools due to issues such as health and safety etc., and this was seen as a great loss for pupils, who were able to gain an insight into the world of work.
12. It was suggested that the City Council might explore supporting young people by encouraging staff to participate in getting involved in mock interviews and 'Dragon's Den' events via the Education Business Partnership run by G Futures.



**This is an audition for your career.
Make sure you know your lines.**

Section 4 – Findings (continued)

Meeting 3 – 25 January 2016

The Group welcomed the following witnesses to the meeting:-

- Sharon Jones, Youth Programmes Manager, Prospect Training
- Steve Weldon, Advice and Guidance Manager, Gloucestershire College
- Jason Dunsford, Employment and Skills Manager, G Futures
- Di Haines, Business Engagement Manager, Job Centre Plus
- Sam Holliday, Development Manager, Federation of Small Businesses
- Barry Jackson, Founder Director, Aspire Academy

What did the Group Learn from the Witnesses?

1. It was challenging for disadvantaged young people who were dealing with personal and housing issues to get training placements. Many trainees left within the first 6 weeks of their training or failed to commit because of their personal issues.
2. Swindon had achieved the Quality in Careers Standards Kite Mark. It was suggested that progress towards this status in Gloucester would improve the quality of advice given. There was also reference to the Gatsby Foundation report 'Good Career Guidance' which provided a set of 8 benchmarks of good practice.
3. Careers guidance should reflect the types of jobs that were available as it was recognised some of the jobs on offer now did not exist 10 years ago. Jobs fairs presented a good opportunity for young people to meet with employers and to see the types of jobs on offer. It was important for parents to attend these events too in order to understand the rapidly evolving jobs market. However, not all companies had the time to commit to these fairs.
4. Some schools were very engaged and arranged for mock interviews and workplace visits to be organised. 'Young Entrepreneurs' events were also successful.
5. There was funding for short interventions such as CV writing for young people aged 19+ through the National Careers Service.
6. There were to be new changes to Ofsted inspections in schools which would put more emphasis on careers advice and guidance.
7. There was to be a review of the careers advice industry and potential consideration of a single point 'one stop shop'.

Section 4 – Findings (continued)

Meeting 3 – 25 January 2016

8. The number of traineeships in Gloucester offered through a local training company and Gloucestershire College was the highest in the County. These included tuition in maths and English and could lead to the opportunity for an apprenticeship.
9. Youth unemployment rates in Gloucester had fallen and those who had failed to secure jobs were often those individuals dealing with personal issues or who were disabled. It was also noted that there were sectors with skills gaps and that employers had found it easier to recruit when unemployment levels were high.
10. There was a current shortage of employees in the fields of health and social care and in hospitality, with young people seeming to be reluctant to enter these professions. Additionally, the prohibitive cost of learning to drive was an issue for many young people wishing to consider certain sectors such as the care industry or the haulage industry as a career. This could have a knock on effect on haulage jobs in the future as it was difficult to attract young people into these roles.
11. In terms of the construction industry, many companies had brought people in from outside the county by bus, meaning that there were fewer opportunities for local people. Gloucestershire College had funding for courses in construction, but they were constrained by the £50 cost of the Construction Safety Training System Test which had to be taken.
12. 90% of small businesses in the County employed less than 10 people and it was difficult to raise their profile as they were often not represented at careers events. Business owners of small companies were often busy running their own businesses. Interestingly, in a recent survey of 11 year olds, 50% expressed an interest in starting up their own business.
13. The requirement for qualifications in maths and English was seen as a barrier to those young people trying to enter employment, as many did not achieve the required target/level of qualification.
14. Social media and ICT were seen as key skills which young people could offer to prospective employers.



Section 4 – Findings (continued)

Meeting 3 – 25 January 2016

15. The results of a recent survey commissioned by the Federation of Small Businesses on the top five skills lacking in young people had been surprising as they mostly related to personality traits and not qualifications. They were:-
- General attitude to work
 - Communication skills
 - Self-management (time keeping etc.)
 - People skills
 - Literacy
16. Many parents were not aware that there were over 250 trades available as modern apprenticeships and still regarded these placements as being in trades such as hairdressing and car maintenance, meaning that they were unlikely to encourage their children to consider vocational training. This was an education and awareness issue for parents and older people. It was noted that some small businesses were just too small to give the necessary commitment to a full-time apprenticeship placement, but it was possible they would consider sharing one on a part-time basis.



17. Parents often believed that only a University place was a measure of success. However, having a University degree did not necessarily increase a person's skills and experience to guarantee job opportunities. Young people needed to be made aware that there were alternatives to avoid them dropping out of 6th form studies if they found they were struggling. It was noted that schools with 6th forms received funding according to the number of pupils they had and that a teacher who encouraged a pupil to consider an apprenticeship route might ultimately compromise the school's funding.

Section 4 – Findings (continued)

Meeting 3 – 25 January 2016

18. Work experience was no longer mandatory in schools due to factors such as the costs of risk assessments and insurances. Added to this, the costs of transport and reluctance to release pupils out of curriculum sometimes deterred schools from attending events, placements or work experience. The value of some of the work experience placements was also questioned, as some young people ended up being given menial tasks such as tea making which was not the best use of time for either the employer or the pupil. Small businesses often struggled to offer work experience as they did not have the time to get wound up in 'red tape' and paperwork. Employers were being encouraged to host 'open days' in order to build up relationships and raise their profile with a potential workforce.

As regards work experience for school leavers, this was helpful, when it was available. Reference was made to a national scheme which obligated large companies to offer work experience.



The Council would find out whether its partner, Amey, could offer this opportunity.

19. The average young person could now expect to have about 10 different jobs in their career. The 'gold watch' days, or a career for life, were a thing of the past.
20. Gaming, ICT and sports, were all fields attractive to young people. However, there were limited vacancies in gaming and it was important that training courses matched employer demands and the opportunities that were available.
21. It was considered that there was little recognition of the skillsets required for the retail sector, customer services and for shop assistants, and that each job should be regarded as highly skilled in its own right.
22. It was important for young people to be imaginative and flexible in their career choices. There was the perception that the focus on life skills was missing in some schools and that there was too much emphasis on attaining qualifications and no recognition of achievements outside of school. It was noted that some young people did not realise what attributes they had to offer a prospective employer, such as Duke of Edinburgh Awards, voluntary work, etc.

Section 4 – Findings (continued)

Meeting 3 – 25 January 2016

23. Colleges and universities needed to match training programmes to the labour market to ensure there were enough jobs to match those young people training to them. An analysing tool 'Insight' provided by the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership provided local labour market information had proven very useful, as had a booklet provided by the Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnership.
24. Due to the recent pension changes, people were now working into their late 60's, meaning there was not the same turnover in jobs as there had been in the past and this was perceived as a potential barrier to young people in securing jobs.
25. Wage rates were lower in the City than in other areas of the County, with many jobs paying the minimum wage which would be replaced by the living wage in April 2016.
26. Transport issues were identified as a barrier to young people seeking training or jobs. It was important to have improved transport in rural areas. It was noted that some providers looked at where new developments were built in order to match and provide future bus routes. Some young people had never been on a bus and would see travelling to Cheltenham as a deterrent.

There were schemes such as the '[Think Travel](#)' initiative at the County Council which offered free bus travel or a new bike/safety equipment up to a maximum of £175 to enable access to employment or training. It was considered that even if employers provided transport for the first few months it would allow time to explore alternative transport arrangements such as car sharing, etc.

A scheme to teach young people how to drive would make a big difference and open up job opportunities as some employers provided vehicles such as those in the health and social care industry.

27. The Council could consider including a policy in its local City Plan seeking developers to provide employment and training packages which would include commitments to apprenticeship and other training placements.
28. It was important to attract highly skilled employers and potential investors to Gloucester. This could be achieved by supplying a good labour force and accessible new employment land.
29. It was difficult for employers to know where to advertise vacancies as there were so many websites. This was also a problem for young people.

Section 5 – Conclusions

The Task and Finish Group's ambition was to identify barriers to young people reaching their potential. During the course of the study the following barriers were identified:-

Barriers

1. Careers Advice

There was a fractured careers advice service resulting in inconsistencies in the advice being given to young people. Careers advisers in schools often did not have this as a dedicated role and it was sometimes 'bolted on' to another post. Some schools performed better than others in this respect.

There was also the perception that because of the funding given to 6th forms that there was financial pressure on schools to encourage young people to stay on in schools and then go on to university when they might be better suited to vocational training routes such as apprenticeships.

At some schools attendance at careers events was patchy because of the cost of transport and reluctance to take pupils out of curriculum.

Some parents because of their own experiences or personal issues failed to encourage their children to attend careers event or give them any guidance on careers matters and were unaware of the types of modern jobs that were available, many of which had not existed 10 years ago. This was seen as an education/awareness issue for parents.

2. Work Experience

As work experience was no longer mandatory in schools because of the costs of risk assessments and insurances, pupils were no longer getting the opportunity to visit workplaces and build relationships with employers.

There was also a perception by some employers that work experience was not a positive experience and a drain on their time and this sometimes resulted in young people being given menial tasks to perform which were of little value to either party.

Small businesses were often too small and too busy to offer the time to young people.

It was recognised that there were still not enough work experience placements for school leavers.

Section 5 – Conclusions (continued)

3. Ability to Drive

The cost of learning to drive was seen as an obstacle to young people finding employment, particularly in the care sector as many of the roles in domiciliary care required driving licences and many did not pay travel time, and this was a disincentive.

4. Need for qualifications in maths and English

The requirement for qualifications in maths and English was a stumbling block for many young people in obtaining employment although some training organisations provided this as part of a course to help overcome this problem.

5. Attitude and personal attributes

In some instances, young people provided obstacles themselves through their own attitude and personality, although it was recognised that this could be the result of personal issues and their home environment.

The top 5 skills lacking in young people according to a survey by the Federation of Small Businesses were:-

- General attitude to work
- Communication skills
- Self-management (time keeping etc.)
- People skills
- Literacy

Additionally, some young people failed to recognise their own skills and did not realise that achievements outside of education such as voluntary work, sporting prowess, etc. could commend them to a prospective employer.



Section 5 – Conclusions (continued)

6. **Apprenticeships**

Some schools failed to promote apprenticeships to young people for funding and other reasons.

There was evidence of prejudice by some parents and older people who had misconceptions about the variety of modern apprenticeships available and only saw them as traditional roles such as hairdressing and car maintenance. This was a huge education and awareness raising issue for parents and young people.

As 90% of small businesses in the County employed less than 10 people it was challenging for them to offer apprenticeships and many of them were unaware of skills young people could offer, particularly with their expertise and knowledge around ICT and social media. There could be a case for small businesses sharing an apprentice.

It was evident that demand for apprenticeships outstripped supply.

6. **Housing, home and personal issues**

It was recognised that some young people were dealing with challenges posed by poor housing, personal issues, and their home environment. The shortage of affordable housing and the cost of rental properties in the City was seen as a barrier.

7. **Travel Barriers**

Reduced bus routes in rural areas prevented young people from being able to access some jobs in Gloucester.

It was noted that some young people would not consider a job if it necessitated them having to make a couple of bus journeys.

Transport links and the cost of learning to drive was seen as a real barrier.

8. **Job Turnover**

With people now having to work until their late 60's, there was not the same turnover in jobs as there had been in the past.

Section 6 – Recommendations

The Task and Finish Group’s recommendations are as follows:-

1. Careers Advice and Guidance

Consideration to be given to introducing a Gloucester careers kitemark in partnership with the County Council and other interested bodies.

2. Partnership Working – careers events

Consideration to be given to the City Council hosting an ‘Ambitions’ type event, similar to that operated at Stroud, with the help of sponsors and interested bodies. There could also be participation in the ‘Skills Fest’ event.

3. Co-ordinated approach

Consideration to be given to the City and County Council working together to identify vulnerable young people in families receiving support from the City Council, Families First, Department of Work and Pensions and the Youth Support Team, in order to develop their employability skills and experience.

4. Mock Interviews, ‘Dragon’s Den’ scenarios

Consideration to be given to Gloucester City Council exploring its corporate social responsibilities and allowing staff and Councillors to participate in mock interviews and ‘Dragon’s Den’ scenarios as part of its Volunteering Scheme.

5. Work Experience

Using the contact networks of the Federation of Small Businesses, Major Employers’ Group and City Centre Retail Partnership, more work experience opportunities should be given to young people (up to the age of 24). This would also include the City and County Council and their partners. Companies should also be encouraged to have ‘open days’.

6. Apprenticeships

Small businesses could be encouraged to offer apprenticeships, possibly on a shared basis, using the network of the Federation of Small Businesses.



Section 6 – Recommendations (continued)

7. **Employment and Training Packages for new employers coming to Gloucester**

Consideration should be given to the City Council including in its Local Plan an obligation for developers to prepare employment and skills plans with the help of the City Council and other key partners. Such plans would set out the type of training and employment opportunities that would be offered by the developer such as apprenticeships, training placements, work experience, and the use of trades in the local area. This could be a recommendation to Planning Policy Sub-Committee and also reflected in the Joint Core Strategy. New investors or employers moving to the City should also be approached by the City Council to see what the Council, in conjunction with partners, could do to assist them.

8. **Developing and Upskilling Employees**

Consideration should be given to the City and County Council promoting opportunities to develop and upskill staff, particularly those in the retail sector, in partnership with the Major Employers' Group, Federation of Small Businesses and the City Centre Retail Partnership.

9. **Travel**

Consideration should be given to the City Council including in its Local Plan an obligation for new employers coming to Gloucester to have their own travel schemes to assist employees in getting to work, particularly those living in rural areas. This could be a recommendation to Planning Policy Sub-Committee. This could include providing transport for the first few months to allow workers to explore car sharing alternatives, etc.

10. **City Council's Website**

The City Council's website should have links to 'Yes2Jobs', Jobs Centre Plus and any other relevant websites.

RECOMMENDED

Section 7 – Acknowledgements

The Task and Finish Group would like to thank the following individuals/organisations for their help and support during the study:-

- Peter Holmes, Gloucestershire County Council
- Maeve Maxwell, G15
- Sharon Jones, Prospect Training
- Steve Weldon, Gloucestershire College
- Jason Dunsford, G Futures
- Di Haines, Job Centre Plus
- Sam Holliday, Federation of Small Businesses
- Barry Jackson, Aspire Academy

Particular thanks go to:-

- Angela Presdee, Economic Development Manager, Gloucester City Council
- Sonia Tucker, Democratic Services Officer, Gloucester City Council

Thank You!