

ITEM NO:

Report To:	OVERVIEW (AUDIT) PANEL
Date:	25 March 2015
Reporting Scrutiny Panel:	Strengthening the Economy and Communities Scrutiny Panel
Subject:	SKILLS AGENDA
Report Summary:	This Review has considered whether Council strategies are fit for purpose in helping to improve the skills of people who live and work in the borough.
Recommendations:	That the Executive Member notes the recommendations in section 9 of the review.
Links to Community Strategy:	This review supports the Corporate priority 'People' through increasing educational attainment and skills levels which will maximise the economic potential of the borough.
Policy Implications:	The review itself has no specific policy implications. Should the recommendations of this report be accepted by the Tameside Council's Executive, the relevant services will need to assess the policy implications of putting individual recommendations in place.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer)	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Any work required by the Council will be undertaken within existing approved budgets.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	
Risk Management:	Reports of Scrutiny Panels are integral to processes which exist to hold the Executive of the authority to account.
Access to Information:	The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Charlotte Forrest:

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1. INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIR OF THE STRENGTHENING THE ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

- 1.1 I am pleased to present this review of the skills agenda undertaken by the Strengthening the Economy and Communities Scrutiny Panel during 2014.
- 1.2 Tameside has one of the lowest skills levels in Greater Manchester with a relatively high proportion of residents having no skills. Data shows that the number of residents qualified up to NVQ Level 4 is below the Greater Manchester average.
- 1.3 In these challenging times the learning and skills agenda in Tameside has never been more significant; it is important that all young people can access learning opportunities that meet their needs so they can fulfill their aspirations.
- 1.4 It is equally important that adults have access to a variety of courses and use of facilities in order for them to improve their skills level to ensure that they can take advantage of employment opportunities and career progression.
- 1.5 During the course of this review the Panel heard from a range of representatives both within the Council and externally that outlined some of the outstanding work that is already being undertaken within Tameside.
- 1.6 The Panel were encouraged to hear about the various initiatives that are available within the borough to ensure Tameside residents are appropriately trained and work ready.
- 1.7 The Panel heard about the collaborative work that takes place between the Council and key partners, such as Job Centre Plus, Tameside College and Ashton Sixth Form College to raise the skills level of those who live and work in the borough.
- 1.8 The Panel recognise the valuable work that is undertaken by the Council as well as the other partners. We need to ensure that all of the departments and partners involved are working in a more integrated and joined up way moving forward.
- 1.9 There needs to be an emphasis on raising aspirations and achievements for all within a collaborative, community culture with a focus on opportunity and choice. Tameside should have an excellent learning community with residents' suitably trained in order to attract a wealth of businesses.
- 1.10 On behalf of the Scrutiny Panel, I would like to thank all those who have participated in this review.

Councillor Alan Whitehead
Chair of the Strengthening the Economy and Communities Scrutiny Panel

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 Compared to the national average a significantly high proportion of adults in Tameside possess no qualifications and significantly lower proportions possess NVQ Level 4 qualifications.
- 2.2 Tameside Council needs to work with its partners to ensure that further education and training in the borough can meet the needs of its residents, employers and their communities. Collaborative working will enable Tameside residents to identify and access their learning and achieve their career aspirations.
- 2.3 Year 11 pupils leaving school in 2015 will be required to remain in education or training until they are 18 years of age. This means that they must participate in full-time education; an apprenticeship or work-based learning; or part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering for more than 20 hours a week.
- 2.4 Tameside needs to be able to provide a broad range of courses and training programmes that engage people in opportunities they value that will lead to satisfying employment.

3. MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL – 2014/2015

Councillors Alan Whitehead (Chair), Maria Bailey (Deputy Chair), Adam White, Andy Kinsey, Ann Holland, David Buckley, David Sweeton, Frank Travis, Idu Miah, Janet Cooper, Kevin Welsh, Leigh Drennan, Mike Fowler, Oliver Ryan and Teresa Smith.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Aim of the Review

- 4.1 To examine whether Council strategies are fit for purpose in helping to improve the skills of people who live and work in the borough.

Objectives

- 4.2
 - 1) To examine the existing Council strategies in place to improve people's skills levels
 - 2) To explore the range and effectiveness of Council initiatives
 - 3) To explore the extent of Council networks and activity with partners
 - 4) To explore how partners are contributing towards the drive to improve skills levels
 - 5) To identify opportunities and barriers the Council faces in tackling skills issues
 - 6) To produce workable recommendations for the Council to help improve the skills level of people who live and work in the borough

Value for Money/Use of Resources

- 4.3 This review supports the Corporate priority 'People' through increasing educational attainment and skills levels which will maximise the economic potential of the borough.

Equalities Issues

- 4.4 Tameside has one of the lowest skills levels in Greater Manchester with a relatively high proportion of residents having no skills. Data shows that the number of residents qualified up to NVQ level 4 is below the Greater Manchester average.

People and Place Scorecard

- 4.5 The following targets from the People and Place Scorecard relate to the Skills Agenda review.

Skills	- % of working age population with no skills
	- % of working age population (aged 16 – 64) with skills at NVQ Level 3 or equivalent
	- % of working age population (aged 16 – 64) with skills at NVQ Level 4 or equivalent

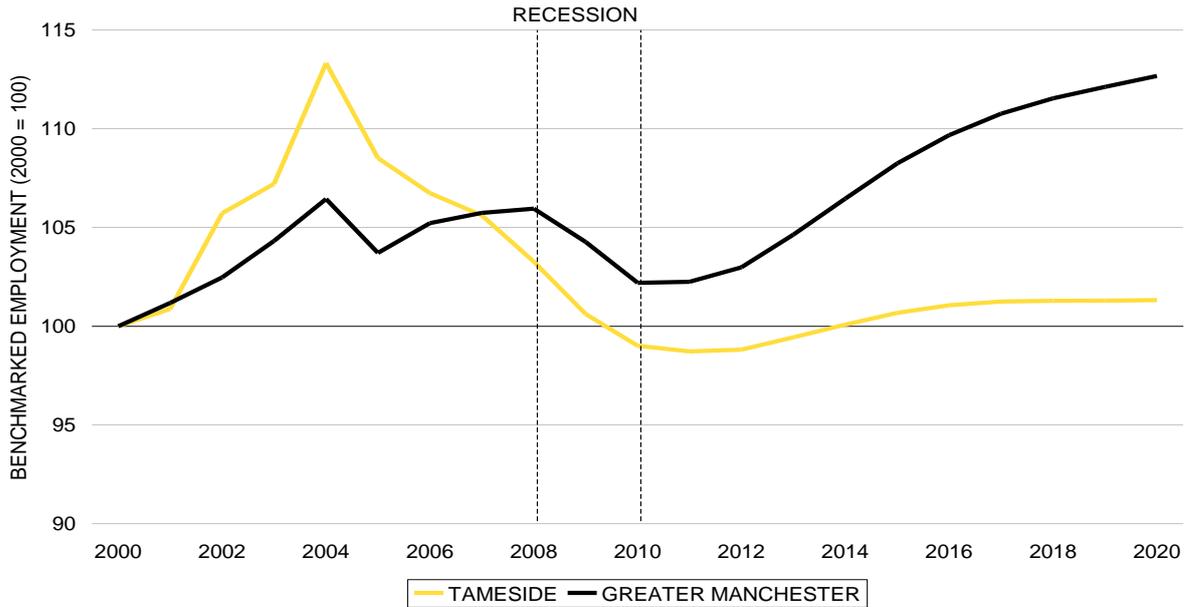
5. METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The Panel met with Damien Bourke, Assistant Executive Director for Economic Development for Tameside MBC to receive information about skills and employment in Tameside.
- 5.2 The Panel met with Tracy Brennand, Assistant Executive Director, People and Workforce Development for Tameside MBC to understand the role of the Council in helping to improve the skills of people who live and work in the borough and the range of activity the Council offers.
- 5.3 The Panel met with Anne Pryer, Vice Principal Business Development and Employer Services, Tameside College, to learn about the role of the college in helping to improve the skills of people who live and work in the borough.
- 5.4 The Panel met with Janet Nevin, Principal of Ashton Sixth Form College, to receive information on the role of the Sixth Form College in raising the skills level of Tameside residents.
- 5.5 The Panel met with Vivien Robinson, Employer and Partnership Manager, Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) and Maxine Roberts, Adult Skills Tameside College, to understand the role of DWP in improving skills levels and the extent of their partnership working.

6. BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

- 6.1 Compared to the national average a significantly high proportion of adults in Tameside possess no qualifications and significantly lower proportions possess NVQ Level 4 qualifications.
- 6.2 Skills are key to economic aspirations. Low skill levels account for the majority of Greater Manchester's productivity gap with the Greater Manchester economy trapped in a low skills, low wage equilibrium.
- 6.3 From 2001 until 2006 Tameside was above the Greater Manchester level for jobs growth. The 2008 recession severely impacted the jobs market. Tameside's recovery rate since 2010 has been at a slower rate than Greater Manchester and it is predicted that it will take until 2033 for Tameside to reach pre-recession levels.

6.4 **Graph One: Tameside and Greater Manchester Predicted Jobs Growth**



6.5 The graph above shows the jobs growth and predicted growth up to 2020 for Tameside and Greater Manchester.

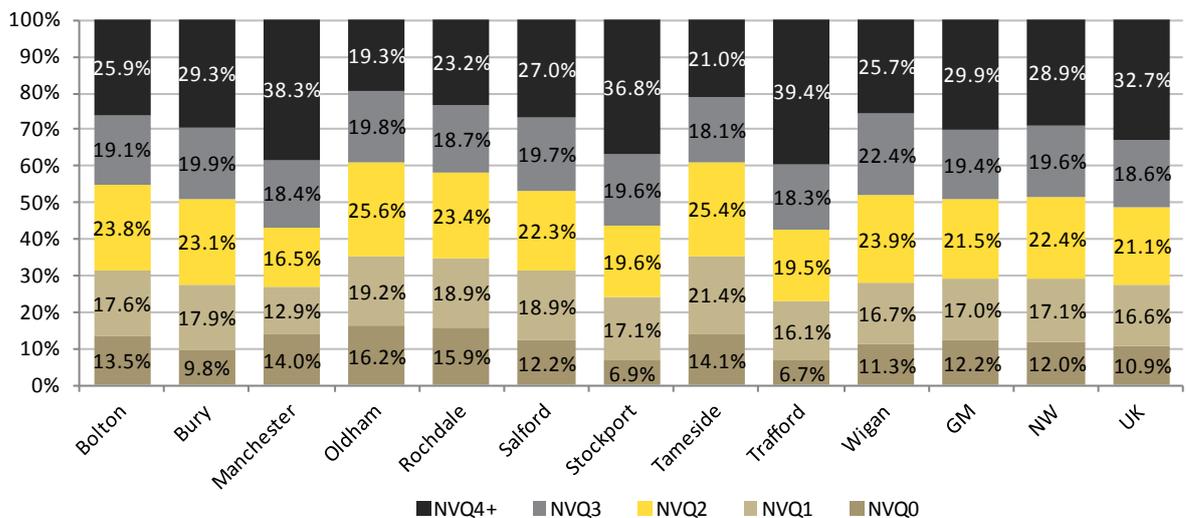
6.6 In order for Tameside residents to compete for the best jobs the skills levels of the borough needs to be increased with offers that suit both individuals and the jobs market. Residents should have the skills and knowledge to reach their optimum potential and make a full contribution to society.

7.0 **REVIEW FINDINGS**

Skills and Employment in Tameside

7.1 Skills levels in Tameside lag behind Greater Manchester, the North West region and the national average. There is a significant low proportion of residents educated to degree level or equivalent with Tameside having the second lowest figure in Greater Manchester for both NVQ 3 and NVQ 4 qualifications.

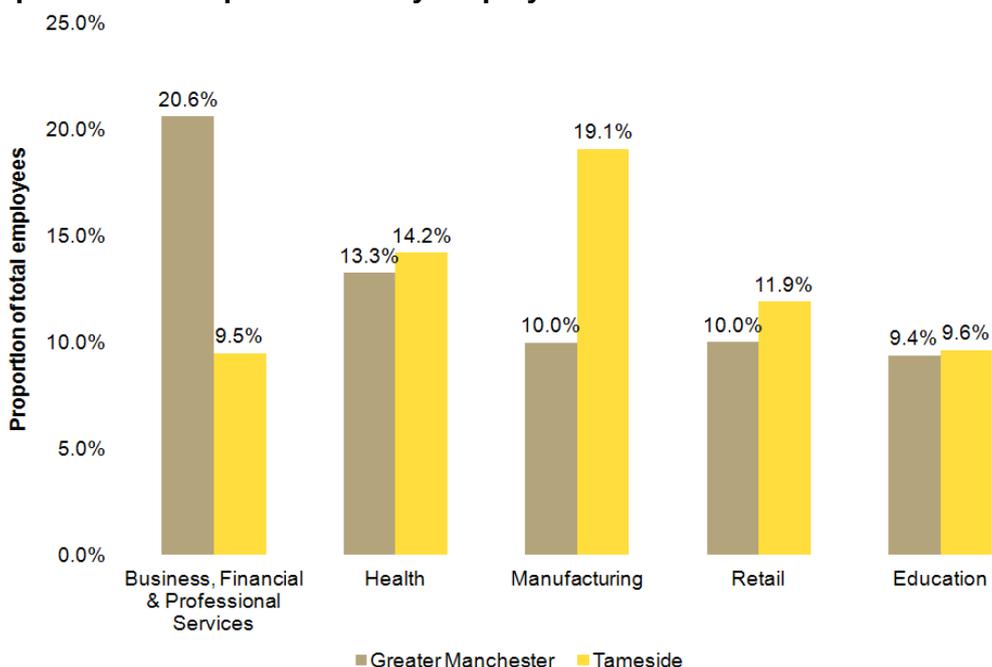
7.2 **Graph Two: Qualifications by Level and Greater Manchester District**



7.3 The graph above shows the percentage of Tameside residents educated at NVQ 0 up to NVQ 4 level with comparison to other Greater Manchester districts; the Greater Manchester, North West and national average.

- 7.4 Tameside has historically had concentrations of employment in the manufacturing sector which was severely hit by the recession. Although recovery has been steady since 2010 Tameside is lagging behind its counterparts.
- 7.5 There is a growing requirement for skills in areas such as sales and customer service. Forecast jobs growth up to 2022 shows a demand for higher skilled jobs for example Managers, Senior Officials and Professionals with a low demand for administrative and secretarial positions, skilled trades and process, plant and machine operatives.
- 7.6 The manufacturing sector remains the main source of employment in Tameside providing 19.1% of employment. The growing sector of business, financial and professional services is the lowest making up 9.5%.

7.7 Graph Three: Comparison of Key Employment Sectors



- 7.8 The graph above shows a comparison of key employment sectors between Tameside and Greater Manchester.
- 7.9 This changing composition of employment with an increasing demand for higher level occupations within a radically changing economy has seen the skills gap become a bigger problem than skills shortages and vacancies.
- 7.10 There is also a gap in terms of young people’s readiness for work with only 54% of 16 year old school leavers prepared for work. There is poor motivation and attitude combined with a lack of work experience. We need to ensure that young people are prepared and appropriately skilled for the changing, future jobs market.
- 7.11 Positive strides have been made in education in Tameside with significant improvement in the numbers of young people achieving 5 or more GCSE’s grades A – C. A record 56.8% of pupils achieved 5 A – C grade GCSES’s including English and Mathematics in 2012.
- 7.12 This places Tameside sixth out of the ten Greater Manchester authorities and just behind the national average of 59.4%
- 7.13 There is an improving trend in secondary schools, with Ofsted scores for 2012 showing 33% of Tameside schools classed as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ with no ‘Inadequate’ schools. Although this is a positive stride in the right direction there is still more progress to be made.

- 7.14 Short to medium term strategic actions to address the skills gap include increased collaborative work with partners and a greater emphasis on employer involvement.
- 7.15 Maximising the skills focus of existing services and resources and the impact of existing skills and employment programmes can be achieved via apprenticeships, work experience and adult education.

Conclusions

1. Tameside has one of the lowest skills levels in Greater Manchester with a relatively high proportion of residents having no skills.
2. There is a heavy reliance on manufacturing as an employer in Tameside with this sector being adversely affected by the recession.
3. Forecast jobs growth up to 2022 shows a demand for higher skilled jobs with a low demand for administrative and secretarial positions, skilled trades and process, plant and machine operatives.

Recommendations

1. The Council to work in partnership with Job Centre Plus, Tameside College and Ashton Sixth Form College to further explore engagement with schools to include more detailed information on career choices, skills required for job opportunities in the local area and routes into employment.

Council Activity

- 7.16 Jobs With Tameside is a new initiative introduced in 2014 focussing on people aged 16 - 24 who have not engaged in education, employment or training for at least six months. The programme engages young people in a work experience placement within the Council so they can become work ready.
- 7.17 This placement is combined with pre-employment training with a local learning provider. It is followed by a six month paid job placement alongside accredited training with close working between the Council, Job Centre Plus, Positive Steps and Tameside College.
- 7.18 In January 2014, 18 young people commenced placements in several Council services including Waste Collection, Gardening and general administrative roles. Nine people moved onto the six month placement and at the end of the programme, five people had secured apprenticeships with two obtaining roles within the Council.
- 7.19 The programme has been continuously adapted as circumstances evolved with a considerable amount of learning amongst partners to ensure future programmes operate smoothly with optimum success. Feedback has been sought from key partners, participants and work experience managers to shape the development and delivery of future models.
- 7.20 Detailed plans and guidance, including a planned briefing session for both participants and work experience managers, are planned for the second cohort in September 2014. This will ensure all parties fully understand the aims and timescales of the programme with agreed commitment by all. This will be combined with a sector based work academy approach.
- 7.21 A Careers and Apprentice Fair was held in July 2014 which involved local training and apprenticeship providers, 'have a go' sessions, apprenticeship opportunities and further education and careers advice.

- 7.22 The event was organised by the Workforce Development Team in partnership with Tameside College and the Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network (GMLPN) who provided funding for the event.
- 7.23 Maximum numbers of pupils attended the event through the provision of transport with a total of 1372 young people participating. In addition to contacting schools, all Year 11 parents were invited to the evening open session to speak to learning provider representatives and view a range of over 50 apprentice opportunities.
- 7.24 The Council has a strong track record of supporting and recruiting a range of apprenticeships up to NVQ Level 4. The Tameside Apprenticeship Programme clearly outlines the roles and expectations of all those involved.
- 7.25 There are currently 42 apprentices in placements with plans to recruit more over the coming months. 46 apprentices have secured permanent job roles within the Council since the introduction of the scheme in 2012.
- 7.26 All apprentices receive a detailed induction and development programme with an expectation of undertaking some level of voluntary work whilst working with the Council and providing support to key Council activities and events.
- 7.27 GMLPN have approached the Council with a view to becoming an Employer Ambassador; there are currently three apprentices undertaking the Ambassador programme.
- 7.28 Three quarters of Council staff reside within the borough and the Council provides a detailed Workforce Development programme for staff in addition to an e-learning programme which allows employees to access hundreds of learning and development opportunities on-line.
- 7.29 The Council has recently commenced a Career Development Finance Scheme giving staff the opportunity to further their personal and professional development which will improve the skills of the existing and future workforce.
- 7.30 Tameside Training Consortium was formed in 2001 and is an employer led partnership administered within the Council. Membership is made up of organisations from Tameside's private, voluntary, independent, health, social care and early year's sectors.
- 7.31 This association of organisations work together to achieve access to quality training with a shared responsibility for creating opportunities to meet need, maintaining links across the North West region, including sharing best practice, and represent employers' professional development and qualification needs.

Conclusions

4. Tameside MBC offers opportunities for people who live and work in the borough to improve their skills via the Jobs with Tameside initiative, Careers and Apprentice Fair, a detailed Workforce Development programme and Tameside Training Consortium.
5. The Council has a strong track record of supporting and recruiting a range of apprenticeships up to NVQ Level 4.

Recommendations

2. Tameside Council to work closely with Tameside College to build strong examples and case studies of apprenticeships in order to engage the private sector.
3. Develop better and targeted relationships with private sector businesses in the borough with more collaborative work making the best of all available opportunities.

Job Centre Plus

- 7.32 Work coaches in Job Centre Plus support Tameside residents into work and examine their individual skills issues and requirements. The following opportunities are available to the people of the borough:-
- Literacy and Numeracy Training
 - Careers Advice and Employability Training
 - Confidence Building
 - ICT Skills and CV Training
 - Learn Direct
 - Finding and Getting a Job
 - Traineeships
 - Volunteering Opportunities
 - Work Experience Opportunities
 - Enterprise and Work Clubs
- 7.33 Traineeships were initially aimed at those aged 16-18 with many not educated to NVQ Level 2 therefore not meeting the minimum requirements to enter onto an apprenticeship scheme. The age bracket was increased to 24 and a 12 week traineeship programme developed around raising the skills levels around literacy and numeracy.
- 7.34 There is close partnership working with Tameside Council, Tameside College and Positive Steps. A 'Tameside Jobs With Training' programme is currently being delivered driven by Tameside's activities under the Greater Manchester Commitment to Youth Employment.
- 7.35 The programme is available to those who have been claiming out of work benefits for 26 weeks with the employer receiving a wage incentive in addition to money from New Economy.
- 7.36 Two groups of young people engaged in the opportunity to develop their employment skills via work experience, accredited training, increasing their levels of literacy and numeracy and knowledge of self-employment via accessing Tameside Centre for Enterprise.
- 7.37 The programme was delivered over 7 weeks consisting of two days in college with three days in a work placement and resulted in 13 out of the 16 participants gaining successful employment outcomes through apprenticeships and work placements. Tameside College maintains links with participants and can offer assistance at the conclusion of placements.
- 7.38 Job Centre Plus also works closely with private firms within the borough and works alongside Northern Employment Services Recruitment Agency to support recruitment.

7.39 **Table One: Sector Based Work Academy – September 2013 – March 2014**

Placement	Details	Qualification
Dunelm	Two day training programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building working relationships with customers - Preparing for Interview 	Edexcel Work Skills Level 1
Currys	Five day training programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building working relationships with customers - Preparing for Interview - Applying for a job - Completing on-line application forms - Equality and Diversity training 	Edexcel Work Skills Level 1
Home Bargains	Five day training programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building working relationships with customers - Preparing for Interview - Applying for a job - Completing on-line application forms - Equality and Diversity training 	Edexcel Work Skills Level 1
Plato Care	Six week course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to the Adult Care Sector - Awareness of Communication - Values and Principles - Roles and Responsibilities - Team Working - Safeguarding - Health and Safety - First Aid - Equality and Diversity - Searching, applying and interviewing for jobs - Literacy 	BTEC Level 1 – Award in Preparing to work in Adult Social Care BTEC Level 1 – Customer Service Work Skills - Certificate
Tameside College Business Apprenticeships	Two week course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building working relationships with customers - Interview preparation 	
Connex-Education	Three day training programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problem Solving at Work - Working in a Team - Job Application Skills - Interview Skills 	Edexcel Work Skills Level 1
Retail Lone Parent Academy	Six day training programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applying for a job - Positive Attitudes - Behaviours at Work - Preparing for a Work Placement 	Edexcel Work Skills Level 1
The Job Gym / Mitchell Farrar Group	Sector based work academy for call centre agents	Level 1 in Work Skills Level 1 in Contact Centre Operations
Textile / Sewing Machine Academy Oldham College	Eight week pre-employment training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open day including basic skills screening in Maths and English - Learning to use various sewing machines - Hands on Work Experience - Guaranteed interview with a Tameside, Oldham or Rochdale employer 	Level 1

- 7.40 The table above shows examples of sector based academies organised by Job Centre Plus.
- 7.41 Job Centre Plus have recently organised a sector based work academy to recruit various roles at Culimeta Saveguard Ltd who predict that 50 new jobs will be created by 2016 due to increased turnover.
- 7.42 In conjunction with Tameside College, Job Centre Plus partnered with local employer Tulip to recruit to butchery apprenticeships. Applicants were supported with a pre-employment training programme prior to interview, an open day opportunity to meet the employer and a factory tour. This resulted in eight candidates successfully recruited to the roles.
- 7.43 Further collaborative work is carried out with Back To Work Complete Training and Convergys aimed at supporting job seekers in securing customer service and sales advisors positions.
- 7.44 The academies delivered in conjunction with Tameside College have resulted in an overall success rate of 61% job outcomes.
- 7.45 However, opportunities are being missed with big corporations who often have their own partners and recruitment. These companies should utilise the local labour market and communicate their requirements to DWP in advance to give DWP the opportunity to get eligible employees ready for interview.
- 7.46 Job Centre Plus also work with GMPTTE to discuss travel options for Tameside residents to access jobs outside of the borough, however, due to the well connected transport links inward flow in addition to outward flow needs to be encouraged.
- 7.47 It has been observed that highly skilled people educated to NVQ Level 4 do not have the necessary work experience to enable them to access the jobs market and require assistance to get them into employment in addition to their academic qualifications.
- 7.48 A learning for employment ethos has been embedded into college courses with job sector links and work experience opportunities; this ideology needs to be engrained at a school level with realistic aspirations at an earlier age.

Conclusions

6. Job Centre Plus offer a wide range of opportunities for residents to increase their skills levels, make sure they are work ready and have access to job vacancies, providing assistance with completing application forms and interview techniques.
7. There is close collaborative work between Job Centre Plus, Tameside MBC and Tameside College to enable residents to access a variety of opportunities to give them the best possible chance in the jobs market.
8. Young people need to be fully engaged around their future jobs prospects and pursue the appropriate training and skills for available jobs.

Recommendations

4. Re-establish links between Job Centre Plus and Tameside College with the Council's Development, Growth and Investment department to improve communication and information sharing.
5. Job Centre Plus to work with Tameside Council to secure employment opportunities for residents in relation to business growth in Tameside.
6. Options explored by Job Centre Plus and Tameside College to offer an enterprise scheme specifically aimed at university leavers to give them opportunities to access the necessary work experience.

Tameside College

- 7.49 Tameside College supports approximately 2500 16-18 year olds and 5000 Adult learners every year to pursue the training and education they need for their future career choices. The College provides programmes at all levels from Foundation to Higher Education courses.
- 7.50 It is in the top three Colleges in Greater Manchester. Success rates for Apprenticeships continue to exceed National Averages and they are the best Further Education provider of Apprenticeships in Greater Manchester.
- 7.51 The College A-level success rate has been 99% for the past four years putting the College in the top 10% of A-level providers in the North West for adult learners. 93% of learners progress on to employment or further education.
- 7.52 The College provides excellent development and training opportunities for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities. Tameside College has developed a partnership with Tameside Council, Tameside Hospital and Pure Innovations to bring the Supported Internship scheme to College students. It is an important opportunity that allows students to enhance their skills in a real working environment.
- 7.53 Tameside Council has provided the funding needed to support this internship and six College students spent nine months in work placements at Tameside Hospital, carrying out real tasks such as housekeeping, porters and preparing and dispatching meals to patients.
- 7.54 The Supported Internship helps students improve their skills in career planning and money management as well as Maths and English. On completion of the course, students achieved a full work-related qualification.
- 7.55 The Apprenticeships success rates consistently exceed national averages / minimum levels of performance. Partner Colleges have equally high success rates and are significantly above the median for general Further Education colleges, and for all organisations including specialist providers and private training providers.
- 7.56 Apprenticeship success rates for 2012/13 are 10 % above the national average with an 85% success rate. Approximately 450 apprenticeships have been offered this year which will increase to 600 for 2015/16.
- 7.57 In 2013/14, Tameside College has been working in partnership with the Council and New Charter to grow Apprenticeship opportunities for young people in Tameside. This partnership has provided over 100 new Apprenticeships in Tameside Companies.
- 7.58 Throughout 2013/14, the College has continued to deliver successful programmes to support the unemployed into work or self-employment. The Job Centre refers clients to a range of sector based work academies and employability programmes.

- 7.59 Referral is via an initial one to one with the client, with support assessed and plans put in place to enable them to move through the programme and into work. There is a mixture of work placement, delivery, group work and one to one support and coaching. The programme lead and supporting member of staff provides mentor support for all candidates on the programme.
- 7.60 Since September 2013, 103 people have progressed through programmes with 61% job outcomes - 16% Apprenticeships, 45% into permanent employment.
- 7.61 In addition to Job Centre Plus referrals, the College works with specific target groups aligned with troubled families, the Probation Service and Lone Parents. Interventions include literacy and numeracy skills and sector focussed employability skills.
- 7.62 In 2014, the College partnered with Positive Steps and Job Centre Plus to deliver the 'Tameside Jobs with Training programme'. The design of the programme consists of Maths and English, Employability Skills, one to one coaching and support and Work Place training.
- 7.63 The programme resulted in 13 out of the 16 gaining successful employment outcomes and a 81% success rate. Three of the young people gained Apprenticeships with the remaining ten securing six month work placements under the wage initiative, all being paid at national minimum wage.
- 7.64 The Tameside Centre for Enterprise provides a base for new business start-ups, incubation space, meeting space and is 'home' to dragons den and the Enterprise board. The centre is busy with referrals from the Job Centre wishing to discuss self-employment opportunities with Blue Orchid, who are based in the building.
- 7.65 Tameside College provides a range of employment and enterprise skills training for the unemployed and the centre has a high success rate with supporting people to move into work or self-employment.

Conclusions

9. Tameside College supports approximately 2500 16-18 year olds and 5000 Adult learners every year to pursue the training and education they need for their future career choices.
10. Apprenticeship success rates for 2012/13 are 10% above the national average with an 85% success rate.
11. Throughout 2013/14, the College has continued to deliver successful programmes to support the unemployed into work or self-employment.

Recommendations

7. Tameside College explore a more joined up approach towards funding applications with closer working relationships with organisations such as Job Centre Plus and Tameside Council.
8. The Council work to improve the promotion of Tameside Centre for Enterprise, also developing follow up support and monitoring outcomes.
9. Explore a range of advertising opportunities such as empty shop fronts to promote available courses and training opportunities in the borough.

Ashton Sixth Form College

- 7.66 Ashton Sixth Form College has around 2000 full-time 16-18 year old students and a Higher Education and Adult Skills provision of around 700 students who mainly study on a part-time basis. The A Level pass rate is 99%.
- 7.67 The college has gone from strength to strength, with improved success rates and some notable achievements including winning the BTEC Outstanding Provider of the Year Award, gaining the Investors in People Gold Award and achieving the Matrix Award for Guidance and Support within Careers and Adult Education.
- 7.68 It is on a journey of continuous improvement, despite currently existing within a challenging and ever-changing local and national context and aims to move from being 'good with outstanding features' to becoming 'truly outstanding'.
- 7.69 Current developments include plans to cater for the international market, 'Imagine your Future' event and the establishment of a comprehensive Raising Aspirations Programme.
- 7.70 The 'Imagine your Future' event, aimed at young people aged 13 upwards, promotes career awareness and aspirations. The Year 10 Raising Aspirations Programme has given students from nine local secondary schools the opportunity to explore Level 3 subjects and introduce them to college, university and careers.
- 7.71 The A+ Trust, a formal and determined collaboration between Ashton Sixth Form College and six other local high schools: Alder, Astley, Cromwell, Denton, Longdendale and Mossley Hollins, was established in May 2013.
- 7.72 Partnership work also takes place with all local high schools, the local authority, other colleges, local employers and several institutions of Higher Education.
- 7.73 Around 1850 students follow Level 3 qualifications with approximately 65% taking the AS/A Levels route and the other 35% following vocational programmes. AS/A Level students have a choice of around 40 subjects while Level 3 vocational students can choose from over ten programmes.
- 7.74 Six diplomas are offered at Level 2 and over 70% of Level 2 students progress onto Level 3 programmes at the College. A significant number of students at both Levels re-take GCSE courses in Maths and English, with a smaller number taking GCSE Science.
- 7.75 Retention, achievement and success of Level 3 performance is mainly above the national average for sixth form colleges and represent above the national average performance when compared to similar colleges.
- 7.76 The College is in the top third of all sixth form colleges in the country on the measure of '% of students achieving 3 A levels or equivalent' (87%). High grade achievement on vocational courses is above the national average at both Level 2 and Level 3.
- 7.77 The provision of 19+ Adult Skills and Higher Education is shaped by the local agenda in Tameside with the following curriculum currently offered to adults:-
- Functional English and GCSE English courses Entry to Level 2
 - Functional Maths and GCSE Maths courses Entry to Level 2
 - GCSE Science
 - Vocational work related learning courses at Level 2 and 3 for Teaching Assistants and Early Years workers; Business Administration; and Customer Service
 - Bespoke qualifications such as Forest School Leader training for primary school staff and a programme about setting up a child-minding business

7.78 The Higher Education programme for 2014/15 includes:

- Foundation degree and BA (Hons) Education
- Foundation degree and BA (Hons) Early Childhood
- Foundation Year Health
- HND Creative Media Production
- PGCE for teaching in post compulsory education

7.79 In 2013, 31 BA Education and Early Childhood students graduated, six achieved first class honours degrees and 19 students gained a 2:1. At Foundation degree level, amongst the 34 graduating students, 65% (20 students) achieved high grades - Merits and Distinctions.

Conclusions

12. Ashton Sixth Form College has around 2000 full-time 16-18 year old students and a Higher Education and Adult Skills provision of around 700 students.
13. Engagement with local high schools is taking place via the 'Imagine your Future' event and the Year 10 Raising Aspirations Programme.

Recommendations

10. That the Council work with Ashton Sixth Form College to improve connections with career advice services in the borough.
11. Work is carried out to track and monitor outcomes of students leaving education with regards to further learning and employment.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 Tameside has one of the lowest skills levels in Greater Manchester with a relatively high proportion of residents having no skills.
- 8.2 There is a heavy reliance on manufacturing as an employer in Tameside with this sector being adversely affected by the recession.
- 8.3 Forecast jobs growth up to 2022 shows a demand for higher skilled jobs with a low demand for administrative and secretarial positions, skilled trades and process, plant and machine operatives.
- 8.4 Tameside MBC offers opportunities for people who live and work in the borough to improve their skills via the Jobs with Tameside initiative, Careers and Apprentice Fair, a detailed Workforce Development programme and Tameside Training Consortium.
- 8.5 The Council has a strong track record of supporting and recruiting a range of apprenticeships up to NVQ Level 4.
- 8.6 Job Centre Plus offer a wide range of opportunities for residents to increase their skills levels, make sure they are work ready and have access to job vacancies, providing assistance with completing application forms and interview techniques.
- 8.7 There is close collaborative work between Job Centre Plus, Tameside MBC and Tameside College to enable residents to access a variety of opportunities to give them the best possible chance in the jobs market.

- 8.8 Young people need to be fully engaged around their future jobs prospects and pursue the appropriate training and skills for available jobs.
- 8.9 Tameside College supports approximately 2500 16-18 year olds and 5000 Adult learners every year to pursue the training and education they need for their future career choices.
- 8.10 Apprenticeship success rates for 2012/13 at Tameside College are 10% above the national average with an 85% success rate.
- 8.11 Throughout 2013/14, the College has continued to deliver successful programmes to support the unemployed into work or self-employment.
- 8.12 Ashton Sixth Form College has around 2000 full-time 16-18 year old students and a Higher Education and Adult Skills provision of around 700 students.
- 8.13 Engagement with local high schools is taking place via the 'Imagine your Future' event and the Year 10 Raising Aspirations Programme.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Council to work in partnership with Job Centre Plus, Tameside College and Ashton Sixth Form College to further explore engagement with schools to include more detailed information on career choices, skills required for job opportunities in the local area and routes into employment.
- 9.2 Tameside Council to work closely with Tameside College to build strong examples and case studies of apprenticeships in order to engage the private sector.
- 9.3 Develop better and targeted relationships with private sector businesses in the borough with more collaborative work making the best of all available opportunities.
- 9.4 Re-establish links between Job Centre Plus and Tameside College with the Council's Development, Growth and Investment department to improve communication and information sharing.
- 9.5 Job Centre Plus to work with Tameside Council to secure employment opportunities for residents in relation to business growth in Tameside.
- 9.6 Options explored by Job Centre Plus and Tameside College to offer an enterprise scheme specifically aimed at university leavers to give them opportunities to access the necessary work experience.
- 9.7 Tameside College explore a more joined up approach towards funding applications with closer working relationships with organisations such as Job Centre Plus and Tameside Council.
- 9.8 The Council work to improve the promotion of Tameside Centre for Enterprise, also developing follow up support and monitoring outcomes.
- 9.9 Explore a range of advertising opportunities such as empty shop fronts to promote available courses and training opportunities in the borough.
- 9.10 That the Council work with Ashton Sixth Form College to improve connections with career advice services in the borough.

9.11 Work is carried out to track and monitor outcomes of students leaving education with regards to further learning and employment.