Report of the
Children’s Services
Select Committee:
Improving the Employability Prospects of
Barking and Dagenham’s Young People:
Scrutiny Review 2017/18

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Lead Member’s Foreword

The Children’s Services Select Committee is made up of local councillors and co-opted members who want to improve outcomes for the Borough’s children and young people by working with the Council and its partners to improve services. As a scrutiny committee, our role is to act as a ‘critical friend’ to help the Council and local agencies to improve. For the year 2017/18 the Committee agreed to conduct a review into the effectiveness of work experience, work-related learning and apprenticeships for young people in the Borough. The review was conducted as a ‘mini-scrutiny’ given the advent of local elections in 2018.

Barking and Dagenham is a hugely aspirational borough, as typified by our strapline of being ‘London’s Growth Opportunity’. We are passionate about ensuring our young people not only achieve the best qualifications they can in school, but also wanting them to gain the right set of workplace skills to see them move into their chosen career and flourish as adults. However, we know that more can be done to link our young people with industry and business, both taking advantage of local small and medium-sized enterprises, to the opportunities that Canary Wharf and the City of London have to offer. We also know that more can be done to link the right young people up with the vocational opportunities that are provided through apprenticeship qualifications.

Over the course of the review, the Committee had the opportunity to look at access to work experience, work-related learning and apprenticeships from three critical perspectives; the young person, the parent and the business. The Committee was delighted to find such widespread support for the importance of our chosen themes, and a community that completely shares our vision for the borough.

In speaking to young people, parents and businesses, and reviewing the evidence available, we set about drawing up a set of practical recommendations that that will impact positively on work experience and work-related learning provision, as well as engagement in apprenticeship opportunities.

I commend this report to all who have an interest in supporting and developing our young people as they transition to adulthood and look forward to reviewing the progress of the recommendations we have made.

Councillor Elizabeth Kangethe
Lead Member, Children’s Select Committee 2016/17 – 2017/18
Members of the CSSC 2017/18

The CSSC members who carried out this Review were:

- Councillor E Kangethe (Lead Member)
- Councillor M Bartlett (Deputy Lead Member)
- Councillor S Ahammad
- Councillor S Bremner
- Councillor J Channer
- Councillor I Freeborn
- Councillor S Ghani
- Councillor A Oluwole
- Councillor D Smith

Co-optees:

- Ingrid Robinson (Church of England)
- Glenda Spencer (Roman Catholic Church)
- Dr Jo Finch (Parent Governors, Secondary)
- Ellen Grant (Parent Governors, Primary)

Youth Representatives:

- Camran Ditta (Chair, BAD Youth Forum)
- Georgia Harley (Deputy Chair, Bad Youth Forum)
- Tedy Sam (Deputy Chair, BAD Youth Forum)
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Background to the review</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Scoping and Methodology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Introduction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What is Barking and Dagenham’s performance on Participation?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What is the Council already doing to improve Participation Performance?</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What is Barking and Dagenham’s Work-Related Learning Offer?</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What is the range and quality of apprenticeships on offer to Barking and Dagenham’s young people?</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What does research tell us about best practice in Work-Related Learning and Apprenticeships?</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Feedback from Committee’s visits</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Next steps</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Recommendations arising from this Review

For ease of reference, the recommendations arising from this Review are provided below.

The Committee recommends that:

1. The Council should produce a short guide for employers which provides guidance around discrete project work that can be conducted on placement, including sector-specific examples.

2. The Council should produce a short guide for employers and schools around web-based virtual activities and challenges that can contribute to the development of work-based learning skills in young people.

3. A list of work experience undertaken by each young person, including those with Special Education Needs and Disabilities, should be provided routinely to the careers service to inform careers interviews and better link young people’s work-related learning experiences to the provision of careers advice and options.

4. The Careers Service should provide a pathway to level 2 apprenticeships event(s) as part of their traded offer with schools for either academic years 8, 9 or 10.

5. The Council Apprenticeships Team should annually engage with parents of young people in Year 11 who have chosen an apprenticeship as their chosen intended destination, by writing directly to parents, and providing parent information events in schools.

6. The Trident Work Experience Team should encourage and support employers to issue certificates to young people on completion of work experience by providing adaptable templates.

7. The Council should explore with Barking and Dagenham College the opportunity to develop distance learning across all apprenticeship offers, as is seen in other London Further Education Colleges.
1. Background to the Review

Why did the Children’s Services Select Committee (CSSC) choose to undertake a scrutiny review on Supporting Young People with Education, Employment and Training?

1.1 The Council’s scrutiny committees decide what topic to undertake an in-depth review on based on the ‘PAPER’ criteria. The section below explains why according to these criteria, this was a good topic to review.

1.2 Members felt that support for young people with education, employment and training was an area where they could potentially add value by reviewing the Council’s work experience and apprenticeship offer, talking to business representatives about the range and quality they offer, and talking to young people, parents about their experiences.

PUBLIC INTEREST

Research shows that NEET status is linked to multiple issues over the young person’s lifetime including under/un-employment, lower aspirations, social exclusion, poor physical and mental health, substance misuse and crime. Government has stated that the issues affecting young people who become NEET cost over £65K each in direct lifetime costs to public finances and £120K in wider lifetime costs to the economy and wider community.

ABILITY TO CHANGE

Members felt that support for young people with education, employment and training was an area where they could potentially add value by reviewing the Council’s work experience and apprenticeship offer, talking to business representatives about the range and quality they offer, and talking to young people, parents about their experiences.

PERFORMANCE

Although we are improving at a faster rate than national, the proportion of the borough’s young people who are NEET remains one of the highest in London.

EXTENT OF THE ISSUE

Approximately 220 young people in the academic years 12 and 13 are NEET, increasing their chances of poor outcomes in later life.

REPLICATION

Cabinet has prioritised work around this issue, with a number of programmes in place. This review provides additioanal value to this work by focusing on the role of work-related learning and apprenticeships in NEET reduction.
2. Scoping & Methodology

2.1 This section outlines the scope of the Review, which includes the areas the CSSC wished to explore and the different methods the CSSC used to collate evidence for potential recommendations.

Terms of Reference

2.2. Having received a scoping report at its meeting on 2 October 2017, the CSSC agreed that the Terms of Reference for this Review should be:

1. What do young people and parents expect and want from an offer of work experience and work-related learning, and how do they see this best contributing to young people’s employability skills?

2. How can the Council better engage with businesses to enable them to support the development of employability skills in our young people?

3. What are the views of parents and young people around apprenticeships? How might we improve the perception and take up of Apprenticeships by borough residents?

Overview of Methodology

2.3 The Review gathered evidence during the Committee’s meetings held between 2 October 2017 and 27 November 2017. Details of stakeholders and their contributions to this Review are outlined below.

Presentation by Group Managers

2.4 On 2 October 2017, the Council’s Group Manager for Integrated Youth Services, 14 – 19 Participation & Engagement, delivered a presentation on Council’s current work experience and work-related learning offer and the Council’s current engagement with businesses around supporting young people’s employability, which covered the following:

- Who delivers this work?
- What is the current offer?
- Examples of career insight events
- Examples of employer visits
- How many are reached?
- How are opportunities sourced?
- Which schools participate?

The Council’s Group Manager for Employment and Skills delivered a presentation on Apprenticeships, which covered the following:

- Overview
- National commitments and Apprenticeship Levy
- Apprenticeship levels and new standards
• Public sector apprenticeship target
• Apprenticeship starts and completion by borough residents
• Apprenticeship starts: percentage of working age population 2014/15
• The Council workforce
• Construction opportunities.

Meeting with Young People in Secondary School and Further Education at The Vibe Youth Centre

2.5 Members of the CSSC had a lively meeting with young people on 10 October 2017 to discuss their understanding and experience of work experience and apprenticeships.

Meeting with Parents of Young People at Secondary School and Further Education at Eastbury Comprehensive School

2.6 Members of the CSSC met with parents of young people on 9 November 2017 to discuss their understanding of work experience and apprenticeships and their involvement in supporting young people to make choices which will affect their future career path and prospects.

Meeting with Representatives of Businesses who provide Work Experience and Apprenticeships Opportunities to the Borough’s Young People

2.7 On 27 November 2017 representatives of businesses who provide work experience and apprenticeships opportunities the Borough’s young people attended an CSSC meeting for discussions to enable members to obtain a view as to the range and quality of the offer to young people.

Research

2.8 During the Review, Council Officers considered the following pieces of research and evidence:

• ‘Accelerating NEET Reduction’ (LBBD Cabinet Report, 2017);

https://moderngov.barking-dagenham.gov.uk/Internet/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?id=3149

• ‘Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges’ (DfE, 2017);


• ‘Towards an employer engagement toolkit: British teachers’ perspectives on the comparative efficacy of work-related learning activities’ (The Careers Enterprise Company, 2017);

• ‘Not just making tea…Reinventing work experience’ (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2014); http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/19359/1/not-just-making-tea-guide.pdf

• ‘Indicators of successful transitions; teenage attitudes and experiences related to the world of work’ (Education and Employers’ Research, 2017).

https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/indicators-of-successful-transitions/
3. Introduction

What do we mean by Supporting Young People with Education, Employment and Training and Why is it Important?

3.1 Under legislation entitled ‘Raising the Participation Age’, young people are now required by law to participate in Education, Employment or Training until the academic year until which they turn 18 years of age (‘Participation of young people in education, employment or training: Statutory guidance for local authorities’, DfE 2016). Whilst there are no sanctions on individuals should they be Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), the Local Authority has a statutory duty to support those who are NEET into positive, Employment, Education and Training (EET), destinations.

3.2 Before it can support young people who are NEET, the Local Authority needs to establish the education status of each young person in Year 12 and 13. Where the education status of a young person is not yet established, they are referred to as ‘Unknowns’ or ‘Not Knowns’. Therefore, at any given time, a young person in years 12 and 13 may be either in EET, NEET, or Unknown.

3.3 Leading research from York University (‘Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training’, 2010) estimates that the lifetime cost of someone who is NEET is £56,000. By contrast, the Department for Culture Media and Sport have stated it is over £65,000 in direct lifetime costs to public finances and £120K in wider lifetime costs to the economy and wider community.

3.4 There are wider social benefits and outcomes to continuing in education, employment or training post-16 as EET status has been linked to various long-term issues including, but not limited to, un/under-employment, economic inactivity, poor health and wellbeing, substance misuse and abuse. In addition, someone who is NEET at least once, is 7.9 times more likely to become NEET again (Audit Commission, 2010).

3.5 In Barking and Dagenham, as at July 2017 (the last reliable figures for the 16-17 academic year) 4% of young people are known to be NEET. This is higher than the average for England (3.2%), statistical neighbours (3.2%) and East London (2.3%). LBBD is in fact consistently one of the poorest performers in London for NEET numbers, albeit one of the best (i.e. lowest figures) for young people whose education status is Unknown. Additionally, by the end of the 2017 financial year, the Borough was second highest for Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants in London in the 18 – 24 age group.

3.6 Reducing NEETs, and addressing the longer-term social consequences is, therefore, a key priority for the Council. This is reflected in the Borough Manifesto which incorporates feedback from residents on key priorities. The Manifesto seeks to address several areas linked to NEET status including:

- Skills & Education – educational attainment levels to be better than the London average;
- Employment & Enterprise – unemployment to be lower than the East London average and income improving faster than the London median;
Health & Wellbeing – personal wellbeing above the London average.

3.7 The Council’s Corporate Plan 2017/18 has a Social Progress Index and key performance indicators also include reducing the percentage of NEET 16-18 year olds.

The Role of the Local Authority (Council) in Supporting Young People with Education, Employment and Training

3.8 The Education and Skills Act 2008, set out statutory duties on local authorities in relation to the participation of young people in education or training, otherwise known as ‘Raising the Participation Age’ (RPA). Young people have, since 2015, been required to participate in education, employment or training until the academic year in which they turn 18. The statutory guidance, last updated in 2016, provides details on what the Local Authority must do. The principal statutory duties are:

- Local authorities must promote the effective participation in education and training of 16 and 17-year olds in their area, so that these young people fulfil the duty to participate in education or training. A key element of this is identifying the young people in their area who are covered by the duty to participate and encouraging them to find a suitable education or training place;
- Local authorities must make arrangements – i.e. maintain a tracking system - to identify 16 and 17-year olds who are not participating in education or training;
- Local authorities must secure sufficient provision for all young people aged 16 to 18 and up to age 25 with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan in their area;
- Local authorities must make available to all young people aged 13-18 and to those up to age 25 with an EHC plan, support that will encourage, enable or assist them to participate in education or training.

A STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Manufacturing) event at London City Airport.

3.9 As set out above, we have a duty to track young people. Our in-house Tracking Team have been very successful in reducing the level of Unknowns in the Borough. We have made strong improvements in our tracking capabilities since 2013. A small
NEET support team also sits within the Community Solutions service delivery block within the Council. This team supports those young people who have been identified by the Tracking Team as being NEET into Education, Employment, or Training (EET).

3.10 It goes without saying that the most effective way of reducing NEETs is to stop young people becoming NEET in the first place. As well as working closely with schools and colleges through the 14-19 Partnership, the Local Authority provides a traded service to schools for the provision of careers advice, and work experience and work-related learning.

What is Work Experience and Work-related Learning?

3.11 A national overview of work experience and work-related learning activities in schools and colleges is provided in the 2017 DfE report ‘Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges’. Although non-statutory, schools and colleges nationally offer a range of work-related learning activities, from careers events / fairs to mock interviews and 1 to 2 week(s) work experience placements. Work-related learning also includes industry visits, which see groups of students from one or more schools visit a business for a tour or more structured learning activity.

3.12 Work experience placements are found to serve multiple purposes, including experience of the world of work, employability skill development and experience to help guide future career decision-making. Here, schools emphasise the importance of experiencing the world of work, while colleges stress a need for students to develop and apply skills learnt during study programmes.
What are Apprenticeships?

3.13 An apprenticeship is a real job with training, which allows young people to earn while they learn, as well as gain a formal qualification at a college of training provider, typically an NVQ. Apprenticeships take between one and five years to complete and cover 1,500 job roles in a range of industries, from engineering to accountancy, public relations to veterinary nursing. There are three levels of Apprenticeship available, depending on applicants’ skills and qualifications: Intermediate Apprenticeship (level 2), Advanced Apprenticeship (level 3) and Higher Apprenticeship (level 4 or above).

3.14 Apprenticeships are available to anyone who is 16+, with the majority beginning at level 2. There are different entry requirements depending on the sector and job. The minimum that apprentices are entitled to earn to depends on their age and length of time on a programme. Starting at £3.50 (as of April 2017) per hour – if an apprentice is under 19 or in their first year – this rises to £5.55 in the second year for those aged 18 to 20, then to £6.95 for 21-24-year-olds, and then up to the National Living Wage of £7.20 if they are over 25.
4. **What is Barking and Dagenham’s Performance on Participation?**

This Section compares Barking and Dagenham’s performance in relation to the number of young people who are in education, employment or training, against national and London rates.

**Barking and Dagenham’s NEET data**

4.1 Barking and Dagenham’s performance in reducing the numbers of young people aged 16-18 who are NEET or Unknown has improved substantially over the past four years. This is demonstrated by the key Department for Education’s national measure of the November – January average number of NEET and Unknowns as a proportion of the whole cohort. This switched to a December – February average in 2016. Figure 1 demonstrates that Barking and Dagenham has improved its performance to better than national average. The London average figure is 5.3%, so the Borough is just below the London average.

![Figure 1. % of 16 or 17 year olds NEET or Not Known 2013 - 2016](chart.png)

4.2 However, the majority of the progress made has been in the reduction of Unknowns, with NEETs appearing to be stubbornly high (see figure 2). The reduction in Unknowns has been largely achieved through better coordination of Council and partner resources. For example, having access to the Council’s Revenue and Benefits database to ensure contact details are up-to-date to enable more accurate tracking. Better and more accurate data sharing between services has also reduced levels of dependency on more costly tracking interventions, such as door knocking.

![Figure 2. Numbers of young people NEET or Unknown in LBBD 2013 - 2016](chart2.png)
4.3 The Borough’s high NEET figures are translating into high levels of youth unemployment. Whilst there has been a fall of 63% in the 18-24 Jobseeker Allowance (JSA) claimant count over 2013-17 in Barking & Dagenham, this compares to a 65% reduction in East London. Looking over a period of the last two years (Oct 2015 – Oct 2017), it shows that the reduction has stalled in the Borough, where there has been a 4% reduction compared to a 13% fall in East London. The Borough’s 18-24 JSA claimant count remains amongst the highest in London.

Figure 3. Barking and Dagenham 18-24 Claimant Count, 2013-2017
5. What is the Council already doing to Improve Participation Performance?

5.1 The ongoing annual work of the local authority in raising levels of participation at post-16 and driving down NEETs is guided by the borough’s 14-19 Participation Plan, which is currently being developed into a larger strategy. The Plan sets out core annual activities against four overarching themes:

- An effective programme of pre-NEET prevention work, including a focus on preventing drop-outs;
- Improved outreach and marketing of existing services;
- Effective data sharing and partnerships;
- Improved support for vulnerable groups.

5.2 Work is additionally supported by a local Providers’ Forum, which pulls together a large range of local partners that are funded to deliver pre-NEET and NEET work with young people. Thirty-eight providers are currently members, with 98 individuals. Members include contractors and delivery partners for the national European Social Fund NEET Youth Programme. This comprises eight inter-related strands and a potential maximum investment of over £1.5m into NEET reduction locally over four years.

The Council is additionally working on a large bid to the Life Chances Fund (a Social Impact Bond) which would see the introduction of bespoke coaching for young people at risk of becoming NEET at post-16. If successful, this will begin in early 2019.
5.3 The introduction of the Providers’ Forum has been key in reducing NEETs. As well as acting as a physical network, where providers can bring cases to discuss, information regarding opportunities for young people is shared virtually across the network several times a week. The Forum is also supported by a Provider Directory, which lists current provision to prevent and reduce NEETs across the 16-24 age range. The directory is published on the Council website and updated monthly.

5.4 Work with these providers, and referrals to them, is underpinned by the provision of NEET drop in sessions delivered by three Council staff in three locations, four times a week, as part of Community Solutions. NEET young people in Year 12 and 13 can book an appointment with a qualified careers adviser, who works with them to re-engage them in education, employment or training. Evening appointments are also available.

5.5 A workshop involving key the Council’s Cabinet Members with a portfolio interest in NEETs and Local Authority leads was held in January 2017 to discuss strategies to further reduce our levels of NEETs, both generally and within priority groups. A series of core proposals and actions were identified and developed into an action plan which was further discussed and finalised at a further workshop held in March. Progress against this action plan is closely monitored. A number of core, longer-term projects were signed off by the Workforce Board in April 2017 as part of the action plan and are currently in place or being taken forward.

5.6 Given the substantial work already being undertaken to tackle NEETs, the Children’s Services Select Committee decided to focus specifically on the provision of work experience and work-related learning as a means of NEET prevention, as well as apprenticeships.
6. What is Barking and Dagenham’s Work-related Learning offer?

6.1 The Council has managed work experience placements and work-related learning on behalf of secondary schools for over 20 years, via the Trident Team. Initially this was subsidised by the Council, but since 2011 the team has been a fully traded service with schools. In addition, most schools buy into the Council-run careers service.

6.2 The Trident Team consists of an Employer Engagement Manager, a Visiting Officer who sets up and verifies placements, and three Work Experience Coordinators who are responsible for placing students, pre and post-16. The Careers Service Manager also manages the Aim Higher Programme which supports young people to access Higher Education, and has a team of in house and freelance Careers Advisers that work with schools.

6.3 Pre-16 work experience placements are usually for two weeks, with Post-16 being one week (although longer for vocational qualifications such as Health and Social Care). In addition, mock interviews are held with Year 10s in some schools, alongside a range of employer visits and careers insight days for pre and post-16 students.

6.4 Approximately 1,600 students are placed a year into work experience and 500 reached through careers events pre-16. Post-16, approximately 430 students are placed a year into work experience and 200 reached through careers events. Opportunities are sourced and managed through termly meetings with Work-Related Learning Coordinators in schools, as well as through strong links with local Education-Business Partnerships such as the East London Business Alliance.
number of work experience placements are also sourced by young people themselves through family and other connections.

6.5 There are variety of career insight events that are organised for schools, ranging from pathways to engineering, law and medicine, to events themed around the cultural and creative industries and health professions. Industry visits include trips to the likes of Morgan Stanley, Lloyds of London and Simply Business (listed in the Times as amongst one of the best organisations in the UK to work for). Employer visits typically include structured activities for young people and go far beyond a simple tour of the building.
7. **What is the Range and Quality of Apprenticeships on Offer to Barking and Dagenham’s Young People**

7.1 Barking and Dagenham Council is committed to creating apprenticeship opportunities for our residents as well as supporting young people into apprenticeship opportunities within and beyond the Council. It has taken a number of innovative steps to increase participation in apprenticeships from vulnerable groups, such as Care Leavers. These include providing a guaranteed interview for to any Care Leaver wishing to undertake an apprenticeship, as well as introducing a transition grant to mitigate Care Leavers losing other benefits in taking up apprenticeship opportunities.

7.2 Each year the Council offers apprenticeships within the Council’s own workforce, in areas ranging from business admin to teaching assistants to trade apprenticeships in plumbing, electrical, carpentry, plastering and painting and decorating. Council apprenticeships pay from a minimum of £170 per week up to the London Living Wage. In addition, our Job Shop service works with local businesses to offer a variety of apprenticeships ranging from accountancy to construction.

7.3 Support for young people to access apprenticeships is provided by an Apprenticeships Job Broker within the Community Solutions who supports with:

- Finding the right apprenticeship by linking candidates with a suitable training provider and employer;
- Providing careers advice on a one-to-one basis;
- Helping to create or update an existing CV;
- Enhancing interview skills and techniques;
- Support with completing job applications as well as putting you forward for Council apprenticeships;
- Providing access to computers for job searching;
- Providing ‘better-off-in-work’ calculations and benefit advice.

7.4 The Council’s Careers Service discusses apprenticeship options with young people, via careers interviews and events, in schools that buy into the service. Young people will also explore apprenticeship options through work related learning and work experience. In addition, national services such as the National Careers Service ([https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/](https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/), which provides webchat and telephone support) and National Apprenticeship Service ([https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship)) are promoted. The Apprenticeship Job Broker conducts visits in schools across the academic year to speak to young people. In 2017, 6 of the borough’s secondary schools took up this offer, with some hosting multiple visits.

7.5 To support young people’s engagement with apprenticeship options, the Local Authority’s Tracking Team conducts an annual ‘Intended Destination’ survey with all Year 11s i.e. the last year of statutory school, which provides an indication of what each young person is intending to do at Post-16. Details of the Intended Destination survey are shared with relevant providers for follow up. In the case of those young people who have recorded an apprenticeship as their intended destination, this is shared with the Apprenticeships Job Broker who then writes to each young person.
8. What does Research tell us about best practice in Work-related Learning and Apprenticeships?

Recommendations based on Research and Best Practice

Work experience and work-related learning

8.1 The value of work experience for young people to enable them to become work ready is widely evidenced nationally. A recent report by The Careers and Enterprise Company surveyed teacher perspectives on various work-related learning activities (‘Towards an Employer Engagement Toolkit: British Teachers’ Perspectives on Work-Related Learning Activities’, 2017). In summary:

- 92% of teachers perceived that work experience is effective in improving student understanding of the world of work;

- 77% of teachers perceived that work experience to be effective in giving students a realistic sense of career choices and what they need to do to secure their job objectives;

- 76% of teachers perceived that work experience to be particularly effective for borderline achievers in understanding the world of work.

In addition, work experience was ranked first in terms of effectiveness by teachers from a list of sixteen work-related learning activities.

Eastbury Comprehensive School Students visiting chartered surveyors Gerald Eave.
8.2 The DfE research report ‘Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges’ (2017, DfE), summarises good practice as proposed by schools and colleges to the delivery of work-related learning and work experience.

Figure 4. Summary of good practice in the delivery of effective work-related learning activities.

- Young people are supported in researching the company that they are due to work for
- Employers meet with staff/young people to better understand the student’s abilities/needs
- Employers offer a programme of activities which allow young people to develop their skills/knowledge
- Employers can access support in setting up a placement

Preparatory activities

- Employers provide feedback on the performance of a young person
- Young people reflect on their experience
- Staff in schools and colleges appraise the effectiveness of their offer

Monitoring, evaluation and review

Identification of work experiences

- Young people are actively involved in the identification of work experience placements
- Young people are given guidance/support to help them find a work experience placement
- Young people/staff have a range of opportunities to engage with employers

Availability of work-related activities

- Work-related activities are delivered as part of a structured programme
- Activities support career decision-making, provide experience of the world of work and help with the development of employability skills

8.3 The report ‘Not Just Making Tea…Reinventing Work Experience’ (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2014), goes further and provides several practical recommendations to make work experience as meaningful and as beneficial as possible, both for the young person and the host organisation. These include:

Ensuring businesses have **good quality information** to discuss careers with young people whilst they are on placement;

Setting up **mock interviews** for young people ahead of placement;

**Talks in schools or site visits** can help to dispel long-standing myths about specific jobs and gives employees valuable skills and experience as well;

**Challenges, competitions and project work** are fun and interesting ways to give young people a flavour of the world of work;
Mentoring is one of the best ways of building young people’s confidence and employability skills and can help employers encourage the creation of a talent pipeline into their businesses as well as developing and motivating their existing staff;

Virtual activities can complement work on site, especially for providing good quality information, setting up business challenges, competitions and project work, and mentoring, as all of these could be done online.

8.4 It is important to note that the Trident Team already meet some of the recommendations above, such as the provision of interviews and talks in schools. However, better guidance around project work that can be conducted on placement would support employers in providing a more meaningful and worthwhile experience for young people.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Produce a short guide for employers providing guidance around discrete project work that can be conducted on placement, including sector-specific examples.

2. Produce a short guide for employers and schools around web-based virtual activities and challenges that can contribute to the development of work-based learning skills in young people.

8.5 Better guidance for employers around project work that can be conducted on placement would support a more meaningful placement experience for both the young person and employer. In addition, better guidance for schools around web-based and virtual activities would encourage young people to better develop their work-related skills, particularly as the CSSC found such strong support for the principle of work experience from young people and parents.

Apprenticeships

8.6 Whilst there is considerable guidance for employers and training providers around best practice in the provision of apprenticeships, there is comparatively little for councils. The ‘Apprenticeships Toolkit’ from London Councils reinforces the need for local councils to embed apprenticeships into their strategic planning around workforce development, as well as strategies to reduce and prevent NEETs. Specifically:

- Councils are encouraged to adopt a holistic and strategic view on Apprenticeships through their members and senior management teams;
- Apprenticeships should be included in any strategy or policy covering employment, equality and diversity, regeneration, procurement, wellbeing,
children’s and young people’s services, anti-social behaviour, healthy communities and the 14 – 19 Agenda;

- Identify which senior managers have skill shortage areas or are keen on workforce development already through the use of the National Graduate Development Programme interns or trainees and speak to them about their views on apprenticeships.

8.7 ‘Apprenticeships – how local government is making a difference’ (The Smith Institute, 2016), identifies specific best practice within Labour-run councils around the promotion and delivery of apprenticeships. These include:

- The provision of ring-fenced interviews for vulnerable groups for in-house apprenticeship opportunities;

- The provision of specific apprenticeship opportunity events, involving local businesses as well as larger employers and council contractors looking to recruit apprenticeships;

- The provision of pathway events in schools and colleges to promote the apprenticeship pathway to young people who might be considering an apprenticeship as an option.
9. Feedback from the Committee’s Visits

Meeting with Young People at The Vibe

9.1 Members of the CSSC met with a large group of young people on 10 October 2017 to discuss their understanding and experiences of work experience and apprenticeships.

Key messages from the Visit in relation to Work Experience

- Members of the CSSC found that careers insight visits to key businesses e.g. in the City of London do take place in schools.
- Many students feel thoroughly prepared for work experience through Personal, Social and Health Education lessons in some schools, with follow up work also conducted.
- Students reported a wide range of options, with some also receiving a certificate at the end.

“We choose our work experience via the Trident website. You rank what you would like to do from 1 to 6 and are given a big range of options, which is really good.”

“At our school if you know what you want to do, you fill in the form and your parents sign it. If you’re not sure, you can use the Cascade website. You do a quiz on the work on it and at the end it gives you work experience options to tailored to how you answered the quiz.”

- However, CSSC Members also found that there was variability from school to school. In some schools, students felt that work experience was not explained properly, which results in young people not engaging as well as they might. Some students felt they were ‘left to it’ and weren’t provided with sufficient support to help them to find placements.
- For some placements in more vocational settings, students find that they are not practical enough, although it is accepted that health and safety can limit the options of what work can be undertaken.
- Whilst employer visits do take place, only certain students are selected to go, which is sometimes seen as unfair.
- Work experience is not referenced in careers interviews, so links are not made between work experience and careers advice in schools.

“Work experience seems to be very limited and only the higher performing students are offered it. We are not told about it in class.”

“Work experience doesn’t cater to practical work or for people who are more practical.”

“Careers visits take place e.g. to the City. I feel that only certain students get chosen i.e. teachers’ favourites.”
9.2 CSSC Members found that young people perceive that there is inconsistency in the provision and delivery of work experience. Whilst in some schools good support is given, in others young people feel they are ‘left to it’ which is reinforcing some negative perceptions of work experience. Similarly, whilst employer visits are available and seen as beneficial, there is the perception that selection of these opportunities is unfair. Further, no links are made between work experience and young people’s careers interviews in school, which undermines the value of work experience.

This session led members to recommend that:

**RECOMMENDATION**

3. **A list of work experience undertaken by young people in each participating school must be provided routinely to the careers service to inform careers interviews and better link young people’s work-related learning experiences to the provision of careers advice and options choices.**

9.3 Whilst inconsistencies in the support for work experience across schools is more challenging to tackle, particularly as the service is traded, the CSSC felt that the links between the provision of work experience and careers advise can be easily and significantly improved. By providing lists of work experience undertaken to careers advisers, the CSSC judge that work experience will be more meaningful and more closely aligned with careers advice and the aspirations of young people.
Again, the CSSC found that there is inconsistency between young people's experiences, with some schools actively promoting apprenticeships and others less so. However, even where schools do promote apprenticeships, this seems to be left until Year 11, which the CSSC judge to be too late.

Key messages from the Visit in relation to Apprenticeships

- CSSC Members found that some young people knew about apprenticeships and where to get further information.
- Some schools spoke extensively about apprenticeships in lessons and through careers interviews.
- Some young people understood the differences between doing an apprenticeship and other routes, such as ‘A’-levels and degrees.

"There is a website about apprenticeships. Also, a lady came in to talk to us about apprenticeships, which was excellent. It was really positive and she got a good reaction from the young people. She came into one of our lessons as well as assembly."

"I know that you can do an apprenticeship instead of a degree. Apprenticeships are different from work experience as you get lots of help."

- However, CSSC Members also found that many students did not know enough about apprenticeships.
- Also, where schools do explain apprenticeships this is often not until Year 11, when it may be too late for some young people to choose a different careers path.

"I don't know how an apprenticeship works."

"I feel young people need much more exposure to apprenticeships to help make them informed choices. I feel that some young people have it engrained in them by their parents that they must go to university so it's important that young people know their choices and do not feel pressured to go to university."

"They don't advertise apprenticeships enough and there is very limited information on them."
These discussions led members to recommend that:

**RECOMMENDATION**

4. **Careers service should provide a pathways to apprenticeships event as part of their traded offer with schools for either academic years 8, 9 or 10.**

9.4 The CSSC found that information around apprenticeships is provided too late to students (and parents). The Careers Services already provide a range of pathways events and should seek to provide an event around apprenticeships at an earlier stage so that young people are better informed about pathways into employment and particular careers.
Meeting with Parents of young people to discuss their understanding of work-related learning and apprenticeships

9.5 Members of the CSSC met with a group of parents at Eastbury Comprehensive School on 9 November 2017 to discuss their understanding of work experience and apprenticeships.

Key messages from the visit with parents:

- CSSC Members found that there was widespread support amongst parents for the provision of work experience and work-related learning.
- Individual parents reported very positive experiences for their children who had undertaken work experience, particularly those that had sourced their own placements.

“My son did his work experience at his old primary school and it went very well. It helped him grow and me to trust him more.”

“My second daughter went to a Post Office Sorting station for her work experience. There were lots of older people working there and she was able to teach them some computer skills which made her feel valued.”

- Whilst parents were fully supportive of work experience and work-related learning, they did not feel sufficiently involved in the process, and would welcome the opportunity for parents, young people and schools to meet together.
- Some parents also believe that work-related learning, including teaching skills of entrepreneurship, starts too late and believe that it should begin in Year 8, particularly as this is not an exam year and, therefore, provides schools with some curriculum flexibility.
- Most parents reported that they were not routinely informed about apprenticeships by schools and understanding therefore varied.

“I have a mixed perception of apprenticeships as my daughter went to a careers event at the Excel Centre (a few years ago) and she was told that she was too bright for apprenticeships, giving the impression that apprenticeships were only for less able people. She was really disappointed as she did not want to go to university, which is what she ended up doing.”

“I also feel Year 8 is the right year to focus young people’s minds on possible future aspirations. They have settled in by this time and do not have the stress of choosing their subject options and upcoming GCSE exams.”
9.6 CSSC Members were pleased to note such widespread support for work experience and work-related learning. Parents want more of it and at an earlier stage. The CSSC noted that parents were not informed enough about apprenticeships and therefore did not feel empowered to support their children in making choices related to apprenticeships.

This session led members to recommend that:

**RECOMMENDATION**

5. **Council Apprenticeships Team to engage with parents of young people who have chosen an apprenticeship as their chosen intended destination, by writing directly to parents annually, and providing parent information events in schools.**

9.7 The CSSC noted that the council annually collects information around young people’s intended destination at post-16. This is not being used effectively enough for those that have indicated an apprenticeship as their chosen pathway. Given the variability in the understanding parents have around apprenticeships as oppose to ‘A’-levels and other options, the CCSC believe that council Apprenticeship Team should do more to engage with parents directly.
Meeting with Representatives of Businesses who offer work-related learning and Apprenticeships to Barking and Dagenham’s Young People

9.8 Donna Finley, Operations Director of the Barking Enterprise Centre, attended the CSSC on the 27 November to discuss the work experience, work-related learning and apprenticeships from the perspective of businesses. The CSSC Members asked a range of questions around businesses’ experience of providing work experience, work-related learning and apprentices.

Key messages from the meeting with businesses:

- CSSC Members found that there was support from businesses for work experience and work-related learning, with some very positive examples cited.
- Local businesses work well with the Trident Team through the process of placing students.
- Local businesses value the role that apprenticeships play in transitioning young people into the world of work.

“We have two apprentices with us and they are essential to the smooth running of the organisation.”

- The variability of work experience students varied considerably, and businesses wondered what more could be done to better prepare young people beforehand and match them to placements.
- Businesses don not routinely recognise or celebrate young people’s participation in work experience.
- Concerns were raised around the impact of releasing apprentices for one day a week to go to college, particularly where a business employs multiple apprentices undertaking courses at the same college. Some colleges offer distance learning options, but far from all.

“We don’t provide certificates to our work experience students, but it’s perhaps something we should do.”
9.9 CSSC Members were pleased to note the considerable commitment that the Barking Enterprise Centre in particular makes in supporting the young people’s skills agenda locally. Some real barriers were identified to making work experience, work-related learning and apprenticeships more effective, with practical suggestions given that could remove them.

This session led members to recommend that:

RECOMMENDATION

6. **Trident Work Experience Team to encourage employers to issue certificates to young people on completion of work experience by providing adaptable templates.**

7. **Barking and Dagenham College to be encouraged to introduce opportunities for distance learning for all apprenticeship offers.**

9.10 The CSSC noted that young people’s participation on work experience wasn’t always celebrated or acknowledged. It was felt that many businesses would value the opportunity to reward young people by issuing certificates that celebrate and record the completion of work experience placements.

9.11 The CSSC was struck by the issue raised around releasing apprentices for college study days, particularly where a business is employing several apprentices. It is unfortunate that some businesses are choosing not to partner with the Borough’s own FE college because distance learning is not offered. The CSSC believes that Barking and Dagenham College should be encouraged and supported to develop distance learning for the apprenticeships they provide, giving greater flexibility to local businesses in managing their apprentices.
10. Next steps

10.1 This report will be submitted to the Cabinet Members for Economic and Social Development and Educational Attainment and School Improvement. If the recommendations are accepted, the Strategic Director for Service Development and Integration will be asked to draw up an Action Plan describing how the recommendations will be implemented. In six months’ time, the CSSC will request a monitoring report explaining the progress of the implementation of the recommendations and whether anything could be said of the early impact they have had on outcomes.
The CSSC would like to extend its thanks to the following for contributing to this Review:

Members thank the following for their contribution to this Review:

- The young people who took part in discussions at The Vibe Youth Centre on 10 October 2017;
- The parents of young people who took part in discussions on 9 November 2017 at Eastbury Comprehensive School and to Stavey Primus, Parent Support Adviser, in helping to arrange the session;
- Donna Finley, Operations Director at the Barking Enterprise Centre who attended the meeting of the CSSC on 27 November 2017.

Members also thank the following Council officers for their support during this Review:

- Erik Stein: Group Manager, Integrated Youth Services, 14 – 19 Participation & Engagement
- Masuma Ahmed: Democratic Services Officer
- Terry Regan, Group Manager, Skills & Employment
- Brigid Gosby, Employer Engagement Manager
- Rosalind Hall, Careers Service Manager and Aim Higher Coordinator