

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 July 2023

Title: Tackling Unemployment and Inactivity in Barking and Dagenham	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Aspiration	
Open Report	For Information
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: No
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Summary	
<p>This report responds to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s request for information about the Council’s approach to employment support, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can we better focus the service and which types of residents are we aiming to support?• What else could we be doing to support residents into employment?• How could we look at improving communications to residents around employment support? How could we best engage with our different communities? <p>The paper summarises the latest data on who is affected by unemployment and inactivity in Barking and Dagenham and the findings from recent reviews exploring how to improve support for those who need it most. It then sets out the current approach to tackling these issues, led by the Council’s Inclusive Economy, Employment and Skills service, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The support available through the job brokerage service and targeted outreach and support programmes for those with more complex needs – including details of a new Supported Employment programme for people with learning disabilities and a ‘whole-household’ approach to supporting people struggling with the cost of living;- Support to develop residents’ skills and create clear pathways to work through the Adult College, specialist construction training centre and a series of growth sector programmes;- Work to promote the London Living Wage, apprenticeships, flexible working and other inclusive employment practices that support sustainable job outcomes for residents;- Key challenges and areas for development.	

Recommendation(s)

The report asks the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to provide feedback on this work and advise on the priorities and targets for employment support going forward – including the right balance between targets to reach large numbers of people and the need to focus and deepen support for harder-to-reach groups in the context of limited resources.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Barking and Dagenham has long had high rates of worklessness, rooted in its post-industrial economy, which is characterised by a large number of jobs in the lower paid service sectors. Many of these sectors were those on the frontline during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the borough's unemployment rate rose to the highest in the country in 2021 and the number of people that were economically inactive increased by 10,000 from a quarter to nearly a third of the population. These figures have since fallen, with economic inactivity back to pre-pandemic levels, but are still higher than the London and national average. The latest data shows that:
- 4.9% of working age people in Barking and Dagenham are unemployed, compared to 4.4% in London and 3.9% in the UK;
 - A quarter (24.8%) of people in the borough are economically inactive (more than 5,000 of which say they would like to work), compared to 20.2% in London and 21.5% across the UK
 - There are only 0.51 jobs for every working age resident in the borough, compared to 1.2 in London and 0.85 in the UK
- 1.2 Long term unemployment and inactivity can drive and exacerbate wider challenges, with the impact felt across different Council services. Income and employment [have been found](#) to have a causal effect on mental and physical health, for example, while job loss, unemployment, insecurity and poverty are risk factors for [homelessness & problem debt](#). This situation has been exacerbated in recent years by the pandemic and cost of living crisis. The number of people approaching the Homeless Prevention Service in 2022/23 rose by 13% on the previous year, and rent arrears among Council tenants increased from £3.2m at the end of 2018/19 to £8.6m at the end of 2022/23.
- 1.3 Improving employment outcomes among disadvantaged communities is key to delivering the Borough Manifesto pledge to drive more inclusive growth, where no one is left behind, and meeting commitments in the 2023-26 Corporate Plan to support residents to access secure employment and ensure they benefit from growth and regeneration. In 2022 unemployment was also designated one of four priority issues that the council needed to tackle to support a more resilient local population and mitigate rising pressures on services in the years to come.
- 1.4 To support these goals, an integrated Inclusive Economy, Employment and Skills team was established in September 2022. This brought together the economic development team in Inclusive Growth – responsible for overseeing business and sector programmes to improve the quality and quantity of jobs available in the borough – with the job brokerage service and Adult College (previously in Community Solutions) working to support residents into these and other opportunities. Funded largely through external grants and endowments, the team is

responsible for driving the Council's ambition to support at least 1,000 residents into work each year, with an expectation that at least 20% have been unemployed for at least 6 months.

- 1.5 The service recently commissioned a review to understand which residents are most in need of support, their needs and expectations, how we could best engage them and what else we could do to support them into work. The work built on an earlier review and work with other Council services to improve referrals, engagement and support for those with more complex needs.
- 1.6 This paper sets out the findings from these reviews and provides an overview of the work led by the Inclusive Economy, Employment and Skills team to support improved employment outcomes for residents. It sets out key challenges and asks for feedback on the current approach and guidance on the right balance between the desire to reach as many people as possible and the need to support those who need it most.

2. Review of Employment Support Needs in the Borough – Findings

- 2.1 The 2021 Census provides the most recent and comprehensive overview of Barking and Dagenham's population, including factors that are likely to impact on employment outcomes. Analysis by the Council's Data Insights team has found, for example, that the borough has a higher than average proportion of households with dependent children; the highest proportion of lone parent households with dependent children in England & Wales; and the 4th highest proportion of economically inactive residents who were looking after home or family in England and Wales (8.2%). Two in five (42%) people aged over 16 had never worked – the 3rd highest proportion in England & Wales.
- 2.2 The data also shows that Barking and Dagenham has the highest proportion of people with no qualifications in London (22.7%) – although education rates have improved significantly over recent decades and analysis suggests the relationship between unemployment and qualification rates is not simple, with structural inequalities also a significant factor. The Census, based on data collected on a single day in 2021, showed that:

White/White British males and females were those most likely to have no qualifications and least likely to be qualified to Level 4+.
Black/Black British females were those most likely to be qualified to Level 4+, followed closely by Black/Black British males and Asian/Asian British males and females.
The highest rate of unemployment in Barking & Dagenham was amongst residents of mixed ethnicity (both sexes) and Black/Black British residents (both sexes).
The lowest rate of unemployment was amongst White British females and White Other males.
On Census Day, only 2.5% of males were economically inactive because they were looking after home/family, compared to 13.5% of females. This rose to one in four (24.7%) Asian/Asian British females and one in five (19.6%) females from 'other ethnic groups'.

A higher proportion of White British residents (both sexes) were economically inactive due to long term sickness or disability compared to residents of other ethnicities.

A significantly higher proportion of White British residents were retired compared to residents of other ethnicities.

2.3 The Inclusive Economy, Employment and Skills team has recently commissioned research to help the Council to better understand the factors underpinning high unemployment and inactivity, and how to improve employment outcomes among those who need it most. An earlier review by the Learning and Work Institute also looked specifically at how to improve outcomes among those known to social services. Together these included:

- A review of administrative data and trends in the Council's job brokerage service;
- Qualitative interviews with out-of-work residents already accessing the Council's employment and skills services and those accessing other Council and community services – including people with caring responsibilities, mental and physical health conditions, learning disabilities and those struggling with the cost of living;
- Interviews and workshops with frontline officers in the job brokerage service, Adult College and other council services including Care and Support, Education and Community Solutions.
- Interviews with local employment, training and community partners.

2.4 Key findings suggested that:

- There is a lack of awareness of the Job Shop and Adult College generally, and of the vacancies, support and courses that they offer, among out-of-work residents accessing other Council services.
- Some people are aware of the offer but not engaging because they are not interested in actively seeking work – but this can be associated with confidence issues, low self-esteem and fear of losing benefits or coping with the pressures of the world of work, particularly for those with poor mental health and those that have been out of work for long periods of time.
- Additional administrative processes across services can be a barrier to engagement, particularly where someone doesn't have the required ID or information for registration;
- The lack of recent work experience for the long term unemployed and those that have never worked is a key challenge.
- The lack of affordable childcare and part time jobs are key issues for parents.
- Carers and those with health issues are also seeking flexible (part time and remote) work, with those with disabilities concerned that not enough employers are aware of the support they can access to assist and adapt jobs for disabled people.

2.5 The reviews also included scoping of wider good practice and evidence of ‘what works’ to improve employment outcomes for harder-to-reach groups and those with complex needs. This highlighted that:

- **Outreach** should take place in locations and with organisations that residents already know and trust.
- **Successful co-location** requires strong leadership, trust and relationships across services, shared systems and processes and data sharing arrangements.
- **Referral and engagement pathways** should aim to make the process as smooth as possible for service users – including by obtaining permission from service users to pass information between organisations to reduce bureaucracy.
- **Strong partnership working between different organisations**, including local community sector organisations, is important to enable an integrated support journey, clear and effective referrals, support through key transitions, and embedding the expectation of securing employment across other services.
- **Successful employment support for people with more complex needs** is tailored to the individual, joins up multiple sources of support, provides consistent support over extended periods of time, benefits from strong relationships between services users and staff, provides autonomy for staff over how they work, and involves service users in producing their own action plans.
- **Relational models** of support, where service users have a long-term relationship with a single point of contact and receive **support tailored to their needs**, are more effective than transactional models where every service user receives the same provision and works with many different members of staff.
- Relational models can **involve family members, friends and others in the community** to build social capital and support better employment outcomes. Examples include **peer support** such as job clubs, the use of **Community Engagement Champions** to build awareness among diverse communities, and a **‘whole-household’ approach** to employment support to tackle complex needs, where people from the same household are offered the opportunity to come together and solutions are sought that meet the needs and barriers of the household as a whole
- **Supported Employment models** are particularly effective for disabled groups, and have also been successfully used with other groups facing disadvantage in the labour market including young people and those with mental health conditions. These are characterised by parallel support for employers and candidates to ensure successful job matching. A detailed understanding of the individual’s skills, needs and aspirations is developed alongside work with employers to adapt recruitment processes and jobs. In-work support is also provided for the employer and employee.
- **Well-resourced employer engagement and support** teams are crucial to brokering good jobs for residents, advocating for their needs, promoting responsible employment practices and supporting employers to adapt and improve jobs where possible.
- **In-work support** for both the employer and employee is critical to ensuring sustainable job outcomes – particularly in the early phase after someone enters

work, for those with limited previous work experience (such as young people), and those requiring adaptations. In-work support can also include work to support progression opportunities for lower paid employees – such as through career ladder and skills escalator approaches.

- **Councils are well-placed to** play a strategic leadership role in the local employment and skills ecosystem, including developing and sharing understanding of the local labour market with partners; working with partners and employers to build pathways into training and good quality work; acting as an exemplar employer around opportunities such as supported employment, good work and apprenticeships; leading on employer engagement and sharing the benefits of its employer relationships with other partners.

The rest of this report outlines our approach – highlighting the existing strengths, challenges and areas of development, based on the review findings.

3 LBBD's approach to tackling employment and inactivity

The Inclusive Economy, Employment and Skills team drives the Council's work to build a more sustainable and inclusive economy, working to upskill and support more residents to access employment opportunities, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, while also working to improve the quantity and quality of jobs available in the borough. Appendix 1 provides an overview of the team's structure and approach, which is centred around five areas of activity:



3.1 One-to-one employment support for out-of-work and low paid residents:

The Council's job brokerage service is delivered through two 'Job Shops' based in Dagenham Library and Barking Learning Centre. During the pandemic eligibility criteria was expanded to make the service available to all borough residents, including those who are in work as well as those with no recourse to public funds.

A team of about 15-20 job brokers support residents with job search techniques, CV-writing, mock interviews and benefits advice, as well as referrals where relevant to training and skills courses. All advisers are trained in information, advice and guidance (IAG) to the Matrix quality standard. They provide clients with an in-depth initial assessment and complete action plans at every meeting. Once in work, people continue to receive monthly texts/calls from their job broker for three months.

The service seeks to strike a balance between preventing more newly unemployed people from becoming long term unemployed, and focusing support on those who need it most – against a target for at least 20% of service users to be long term (6 months+) unemployed.

To meet this, the Job Shop conducts marketing and outreach work to increase awareness of the service across different communities and improve referrals from external partners and other council teams and services. The majority of service users self-refer through the website, followed by referrals from Jobcentre Plus and teams in Community Solutions. The service is currently seeking to raise awareness of the offer as part of the Council’s response to the cost of living crisis – with a broad marketing campaign and work to engage residents through co-location and partnerships with other services, faith groups and community organisations.

The table below shows the service outcomes over the last four years – including the impact of the pandemic, which led to a sustained fall in the numbers registering and entering work.

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022-23
Registrations	1635	802	844	1061
Job Starts	1251	765	856	885
Sustained (3 months)	483	282	332	365
Apprenticeship starts (excluding construction)	39	24	27	34
Volunteering	38	16	32	40
Traineeships	N.A (<i>target not in place</i>)	N.A (<i>target not in place</i>)	20	11

Registrations have been increasing since the COVID-related restrictions eased. The period has seen an increase in the number of people registering with the service who are in work and those with qualifications at Level 3 (upper secondary) and above. At the same time, there has been a significant increase in the number of people registering with the job brokerage service that are long term (6 months+) unemployed, rising to 40% of Job Shop service users in 2021-22. The numbers increased again in 2022 to 2023, although a significant rise in the number of newly unemployed residents (0-3 months) meant that the proportion of long term unemployed fell to a third (33%) of service users. The table below sets out job outcomes by length of employment. Those unemployed for more than six months

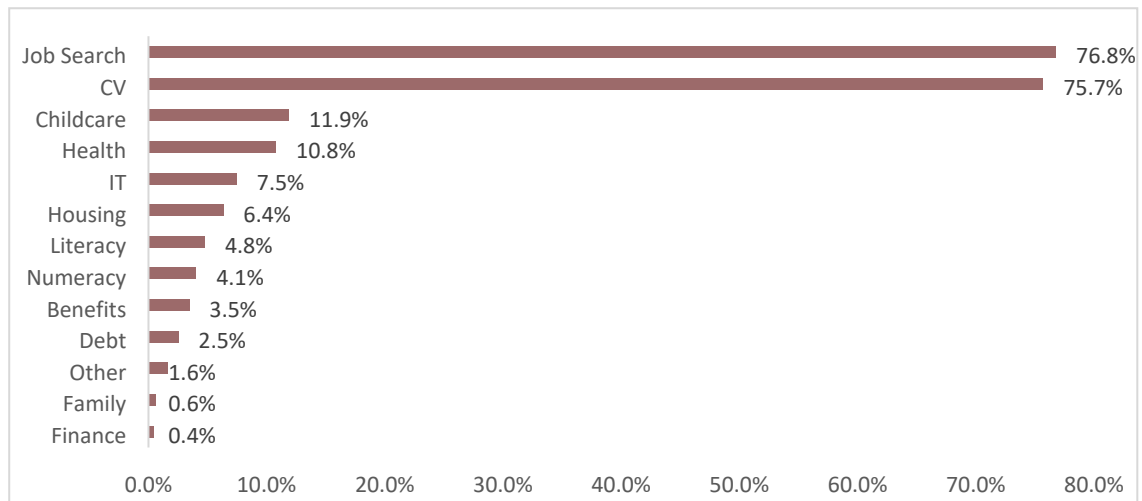
accounted for about a third of all job outcomes in both 2021-22 (34%) and 2022-23 (32%) – see table below – well over the service target of 20%.

Length of unemployment	Job starts Apr 20 - Mar 21	% against total job starts	Job starts Apr 21 - Mar 22	% against total job starts	Job starts Apr 22 - Mar 23	% against total job starts
Never Worked	39	10%	61	10%	55	9%
0 - 3 months	146	37%	145	25%	148	24%
3 - 6 Months	47	12%	46	8%	54	9%
6 - 12 Months	42	11%	84	14%	44	7%
1 year+	65	16%	119	20%	151	25%
Currently Working	57	14%	134	23%	160	26%

The increase in long term unemployed service users has also been associated with a rise in the number of people with more complex barriers to work, including health, caring and housing needs. Recent Job Shop data shows that nearly a quarter (23%) of those that registered in 2022-23 reported having a health condition, up from 17% in 2021-22. One in ten (10%) reported having a mental or physical condition that has a substantial and long term affect on their ability, compared to 7% in 2021-22. More people are also registering with caring responsibilities. Between 2019 and 2022, over one in ten people (12%) registering with the Job Shop indicated that childcare was a barrier to work, rising to over 20% among women and those aged between 30 and 49.

The job brokerage service provides a dedicated programme for people in receipt of housing/council tax benefit, living in a council property or at threat of arrears and homelessness into employment, funded by an annual grant from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). In 2022-23, the Job Shop supported 289 people under this programme – or 27% of total registrations. Of these, 21% were in rent arrears, temporary accommodation, hostels an/or at risk of homelessness. Nearly two-thirds (61%) were supported into work.

The majority of service users are seeking support with job search (77%) and CVs (76%), citing these as the main ‘barriers’ they face. While a much smaller proportion of service users cite basic skills (literacy, language, numeracy, IT) and housing and debt as barriers, job entry outcomes among these jobseekers and those unemployed for long periods of time are lower than for other groups. Of the residents who present with a literacy, numeracy or ‘other’ skills needs (including ESOL), only 3 in 10 go on to achieve a job outcome.



Self-reported barriers to work – data from 2019-2022

Analysis of service data since 2019 suggests that females are more likely to access the job brokerage service than males, representing 58% of service users in 2022-23. More than two-thirds (69%) of those registering with the job shop were under 45 in 2022-23, compared to 75% between 2019-22. This difference was driven by a large increase in the number of people aged 16-24 during COVID due to the Council’s Kickstart scheme, which provided six month paid placements for young people as part of a national programme. More broadly, customer trends appear to mirror some of the wider trends and demographics across the borough:

More than two-thirds of those registering with the Job Shop are from racially minoritized communities, with Black African and Black Caribbean residents registering at a higher rate than represented in the LBBD population.

Black African and Asian (Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and ‘Asian other’) residents are registering with Level 4+ qualifications most frequently, while White British/Irish residents are doing so least frequently.

One in ten White British/Irish and ‘White Other’ residents registering with the Job Shops have no qualifications – the highest of any group.

There is a relationship between areas with high benefit claimant counts, hostels and higher numbers of Job Shop registrations.

Overall, the changing profile of those accessing the Council’s job brokerage service means that the average time candidates are taking to secure employment has increased significantly. This, in turn, has an impact on the service’s resourcing and ability to hit the target to support 1,000 people into work. For example, those receiving support under the housing programme took on average 375 days to enter work after registration in 2022-23. Based on analysis of staff time (assessments, support sessions and administrative time etc), the actual cost of this support was, as a result, £200k higher than the amount paid by the HRA. There is a need to examine the priorities for the team within the context of rising need and limited resources.

3.2 Targeted outreach and support for harder-to-reach groups

In addition to the core employment offer, the service supports a number of targeted and specialist initiatives to improve employment outcomes among harder to reach

groups – with a focus on economically inactive people that are receiving support from other council teams and services. This seeks to:

- a) take advantage of the Council's ability to engage these groups, who are unlikely to be in touch with other mainstream employment services;
- b) support work to prevent wider service and cost pressures within the Council by improving the wellbeing and independence of those with more complex needs;
- c) support the Council to meet statutory duties to track and support improvements in the number of young people not in education, employment or training and improve the wellbeing, including through employment, of those in receipt of social care support.

3.2.1 Improving outcomes for those known to social services

The Council has a number of targeted initiatives in place to fulfil its statutory responsibilities relating to young people that are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and those known to social care:

- The Education team oversees two dedicated careers advisers for young people with EHC Plans and coordinates activities to track and engage young people who are NEET and those whose whereabouts is unknown – with performance overseen by a quarterly board bringing together key stakeholders. The approach has been associated with a significant fall in the number of NEETs and 'unknowns' in recent years. The Care Leaving team also coordinate a case review panel for care leavers that are NEET.
- The Vocational Support Service in Community Solutions provides support to help people with diagnosed mental health conditions and learning disabilities towards sustainable employment. This includes a dedicated job broker commissioned by the Disability service to support people with learning disabilities in receipt of social care support, with a caseload of 25. The pandemic led to a drop in engagement for this group, but since 2021 there have been small but steady increases in the number of Disability service users supported into work, although more resources are required to move closer to the London average of 5.2%.

3.2.2 A new Supported Employment programme for people with learning disabilities

The Inclusive Economy, Employment and Skills team supports the specialist initiatives supporting those known to social services by leading on strategy, fundraising and efforts to secure suitable employment opportunities. In 2022, the team commissioned the review by the Learning and Work Institute to identify how to improve outcomes for these groups. This recommended developing a Supported Employment programme for people with learning disabilities as a priority – with scope to extend to those with mental health conditions.

Following a successful bid to the Department for Work and Pensions, supported by match funding from the job brokerage service, a new Supported Employment programme launched in November 2022. It will support 100 people over 2 years, with a target of 30 employment outcomes.

The work to identify, engage and support people with learning disabilities is being coordinated by the Vocational Support Service, enabling the recruitment of a

coordinator and additional job broker to support people with learning disabilities. This will provide more resources for the existing work with Disability service users, but also enable additional preventative work with younger people with special educational needs and disabilities, and engage for those not eligible for support through adult social services.

The job brokerage service is leading the parallel work to engage more employers to offer flexible and Supported Employment opportunities for those with disabilities. This includes work to design and promote supported internships and apprenticeships for people with disabilities within the Council and its major contractors. These seek to build on an unpaid Supported Internship scheme (REACH) delivered by Barking and Dagenham College – providing 40+ internships with 9 employers since the programme began in 2019 – by providing follow-on paid opportunities.

A quarterly forum brings together internal and external partners to coordinate activities to improve employment outcomes for people with learning disabilities, monitor performance and support continuous improvement.

3.2.3 A 'whole-household' approach to supporting people with complex needs

In 2022, the job brokerage service was allocated 12 months' funding through the Council's Welfare Reserve Fund to improve income and employment outcomes among those struggling with the cost of living crisis.

Drawing on the review of best practice into effective employment support for those with complex needs, this has led to the development of a new programme that trials the 'whole-household approach' to employment support. Residents will be invited to attend with another person from the same household, with work to find solutions that meet the needs of the whole-household, not just one individual.

The new programme launches in July 2023 and will embed two new Outreach and Support Brokers from the job brokerage service in other council and community services working with people struggling with the cost of living, starting initially with people accessing the Homes and Money Hub for debt advice. It seeks to provide longer term, more relational support for those with complex needs, minimising administrative processes across teams and tackling wider barriers where necessary before engaging in job search activity.

In addition to this pilot led by the job brokerage service, which has funding until March 2024, Community Solutions have funded a separate pilot with an external employment support organisation to support people in temporary accommodation to move into sustainable work and housing solutions. Both of these will be reviewed to explore how good practice can be extended or embedded into the Council's employment support offer.

3.3 Improving the skills and confidence of out-of-work residents

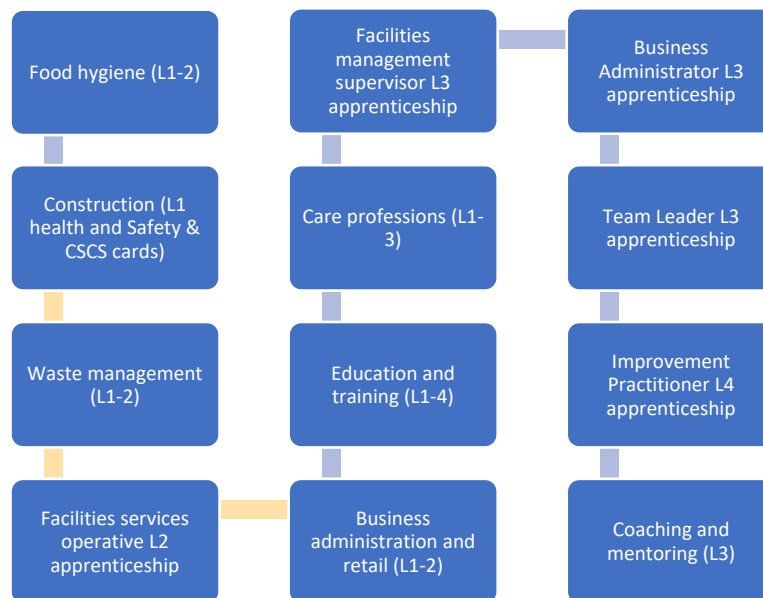
Another key vehicle for engaging diverse communities and harder-to-reach groups is the Adult College, which was integrated with the job brokerage service in 2018 and supports all learners to progress through learning and towards employment, providing courses to build confidence, develop functional and employability skills, and support pathways into work.

Funded by a grant from the GLA, the College supports on average 1,700 learners and 3,500 course starts a year, with targets to engage unemployed learners (50% of the total) and those with no qualifications (20% on enrolment). They achieve high satisfaction scores and 94% retention on average. Their last Ofsted rating was Good, with the next one due imminently.

More than half of course starts at the Adult College are currently in **community learning and wellbeing**. These free courses range from courses for parents to support their children's schooling, online safety, and household finances; to creative activities for adults and children, as well as mindfulness, yoga and meditation; and courses about living with dementia, anxiety and depression. These courses can often be a first step into learning for residents, before moving into accredited courses and those supporting a pathway towards employment. They also reflect the broader role adult colleges have historically played supporting personal development and improving local health, wellbeing and social cohesion.

The Adult College is the main provider of courses to build **functional skills** among adults in the borough, supporting residents that need to improve their English language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills to help them to move towards employment. The College has recently secured additional resources to enable an expansion of this provision to meet high demand, with a particular focus on digital skills and numeracy. This includes three-year's funding through the government's national Multiply scheme to embed numeracy in vocational courses and support residents with money management and budgeting skills in light of the ongoing cost of living crisis and deprivation indicators in the borough.

Finally, the Adult College and job brokerage service deliver a range of work-focused courses, with a target to support at least 400 people a year into **employability** courses. These are free and include CV and job search support, as well as two sector-based work academy programmes designed to help jobseekers to access jobs in the civil service and health care sectors. The offer includes a small number of **vocational qualifications** (summarised in the diagram below) in food, care, education, administration, facilities management and leadership, some of which are fee-paying. In 2022, the service built on this by launching a new specialist construction training facility (the Barking Riverside Innovation Centre - BRIC) to improve pathways into jobs in construction and the green economy. This currently provides entry level construction health and safety courses to ensure candidates are site-ready, waste management training and energy awareness courses. The centre has been established as a CSCS card accreditation test centre – due to launch to the public shortly.



Continuing professional development courses are also available in areas such as paediatric first aid and SEND, dyslexia, mental health and deaf awareness that incur a small fee.

3.4 Creating structured pathways into good jobs in growth sectors

In addition to the vocational course offer available through the Adult College and job brokerage service, the Inclusive Economy, Employment and Skills team oversees a series of strategies in growth sectors to secure more good work and development opportunities for residents. The programmes seek to connect residents to work opportunities in higher paying, higher skilled sectors linked to major new developments, but also work to improve the quality of jobs in the ‘everyday’ economy sectors where many people work:



FILM: Launched in February 2022, the Make It Here programme was set up to ensure residents benefit from the new film studios. It is creating careers activities in schools and developing accredited training pathways for young people as well as shorter bootcamp courses to support local workers and job-seekers to access opportunities in film. So far it has supported over 1,600 young people to understand careers in film and brokered 2 London Living Wage jobs at the Wharf Studios and 50+ paid placements with visiting productions for local people.



FOOD: We worked with Be First to secure Section 106 funding and commitments from the City of London to ensure residents benefit from the relocation of the food wholesale markets. These will support pathways into good jobs in food through a new Borough Food School and support for local food businesses and entrepreneurs to grow, underpinned by a new food hub in Barking town centre and a Good Food Plan and Partnership to improve access to healthy, affordable and sustainable food. The Plan includes work with the Council-owned school catering service to ensure more schools provide nutritious, sustainable meals for children, delivered by staff paid at least the London Living Wage.



CARE: We are working with the Adult Care and Support commissioning team to deliver a joint Action Plan to improve job quality and standards in the

local care sector. As a result of this work, all future contracts will require care providers to pay staff on council-funded provision the London Living Wage. The work has also led to an uplift to enable carers paid through personal budgets to earn the London Living Wage. We are now working with Council-funded providers to improve recruitment and progression pathways for care workers and the approach to flexible working, and with social services to fill a key skills gap in occupational therapists.



CONSTRUCTION: We implemented the Council's commitment to adhere to the Unite Construction Charter – ensuring workers on Be First sites are paid the London Living Wage, employed on PAYE and have access to trade union representation. We also negotiate, monitor and support Be First contractors and other developers to meet their Section 106 local employment, skills and supply chain commitments, with dedicated job brokers to support residents to access work experience, apprenticeship and job opportunities in construction. We are currently working to improve awareness and access to these opportunities through a coordinated programme, including work to develop the BRIC's training offer.



GREEN ECONOMY: During the pandemic we secured government funding to establish a local Green Skills, Green Jobs programme to help residents to understand and access job opportunities in the green economy. Over 300 residents have attended information sessions (including targeted sessions for Ukrainian refugees), 87 have gained qualifications, and 58 have secured 'green' jobs as a result of the programme. Education and job outcomes were below target due to the lack of relevant training and jobs available. We are exploring how to build on this work when funding for the programme runs out in Summer 2023 to secure more green jobs for residents and build the relevant training pathways.

All the sector strategies promote job opportunities through the job brokerage service and work with key local education institutions – local schools, Barking and Dagenham College and CU London, as well as the Adult College – to provide careers activities and support accredited training pathways to meet gaps and opportunities.

3.5 Promoting inclusive employment practices to support sustainable job outcomes

Finally, the Inclusive Economy, Employment and Skills team oversee a range of policies, programmes and services to create work opportunities and promote inclusive employment practices across all employers and sectors, with a view to supporting more sustainable job outcomes.

3.5.1 Engaging employers to recruit locally and offer apprenticeships

The Employer Engagement team in the job brokerage service provides a free recruitment service for employers that hire locally – aiming to engage 250 new and 45 returning employers each year. During the pandemic the team worked with 40 employers to create paid Kickstart placements for over 200 local 16–24-year-olds. When this closed in March 2022 they developed a partnership with a DWP-backed initiative to support local SMEs set up high quality apprenticeships and cover training costs through the Council's Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Scheme. The team play a key role in promoting opportunities secured through the sector programmes, and run

regular job fairs across the borough. In May 2023 a job fair with 14 employers in Barking Town Centre was attended by over 500 people.

Going forward, the team is seeking to develop their role in tackling the structural issues facing residents by promoting job quality improvements and accreditations such as Living Wage and the Mayor's Good Work Standard. They are leading the work to promote more Supported Employment opportunities for those with disabilities, and alongside this are working with flexible working experts Timewise to develop a broader job design offer to support employers to meet candidate needs and expectations around more flexible and family-friendly working patterns since the pandemic. Timewise will also train all job brokers in how to support candidates seeking flexible work to better advocate for their needs at the point of recruitment.

More widely, the Inclusive Economy team oversees the Council's Business Forum and drives work to ensure the Council is using its planning, procurement, convening and other powers to promote good working practices, with a particular focus on encouraging employers to hire locally, offer apprenticeships and pay the London Living Wage. This has included:

- Working with Procurement and commissioning teams to develop the Council's policy and strategy to secure Social Value from major suppliers and ensure contracted service providers pay the London Living Wage. In 2022-23, Social Value clauses secured 35 work experience/volunteering roles and 26 paid jobs and work placements for residents from contractors, among other community benefits.
- Working with Be First to modernise commercial space and strengthen the borough's Section 106 Employment, Training and Supply Chain policy in the new Local Plan. This requires all major developers in the borough to hire at least 25% local people, offer work experience and apprenticeships, and buy 25% of all goods and services from businesses based in the borough – and to contribute financially to support employment elsewhere if targets are not met.
- Overseeing a programme to mitigate job losses in the worst-affected sectors during the pandemic, and designing a programme to support local businesses to access supply chain opportunities at the Council and other local anchor institutions, including help to understand and meet requirements to pay the real London Living Wage, due to launch in September 2023.

4 Issues and challenges

4.1 The recent reviews of the employment support offer have highlighted a number of ongoing challenges including:

- **Balancing different priorities:** There is an increasing tension between the Council's desire to support 1,000 people into work each year and the focus on more vulnerable groups that require more support before moving into work.
- **Visibility and awareness:** The work of the Inclusive Economy, Employment and Skills service lacks visibility. There is only basic information online, and the team has limited social media presence or marketing resources. These factors limit awareness of and access to the service, and restrict its ability to attract

suitable candidates that meet the needs of employers. To address this we plan to develop the digital presence and information about the work of the Inclusive Economy, Employment and Skills team including the job brokerage service and Adult College through a new dedicated microsite in the coming months.

- **Funding:** The reliance on external funding means the offer is vulnerable to changes in policies and priorities elsewhere and can make it difficult to establish a sustainable offer for those with more complex needs, who require longer term support to achieve job outcomes. Eligibility criteria set by external funders can focus on those closer to the labour market and limit the Council's ability to conduct preventative work, such as engaging young people known to social services in education or those in-work who are struggling due to caring responsibilities or health issues. The current funding provided through the Welfare Reserve is enabling the job brokerage service to develop targeted pathways in line with council priorities, but is only temporary. The service is in the process of exploring other sources of funding to enable this work to continue.
- **Coordination:** There are pockets of employment support activity across the council. Some of this reflects strong cross-council partnerships and is coordinated by or with the job brokerage service. But some of it has been developed separately and risks missing opportunities to pool resources, develop a joined up approach, and enable monitoring and reporting of outcomes across the council. The service is exploring how to improve touch points and improve accountability across different initiatives and is convening two forums to ensure strong cross-sector coordination around employment support for people with learning disabilities and the whole-household support pilot.

4.2 The report asks the Executive team/OSC to provide feedback on this work and advise on the priorities and targets for employment support going forward – including the right balance between targets to reach large numbers of people and the need to focus and deepen support for harder-to-reach groups, and how this can be effectively resourced.

5 Consultation

5.1 The reviews to inform the Council's approach to employment included interviews and co-design workshops with multiple stakeholders including representatives from teams across the council (including those overseeing the development of Community Hubs and education, debt advice, youth offending, disability, mental health, care leaving and unpaid carers teams) and external employment, training and community partners including Community Resources, CAB, CVS, DADB, the Out and About Service, B&D College, CU London, Jobcentre Plus and Maximus.

5.2 The reviews included qualitative interviews with those directly affected by unemployment and inactivity – including people with learning disabilities, caring responsibilities, mental health conditions and those accessing the council's debt advice service and other community services supporting residents with the cost of living. Feedback is also sought from service users at the Adult College and job brokerage service on a regular basis to inform the approach.

5.3 The approach has been discussed and is regularly reported on to the Cabinet Member for Employment, Skills and Aspiration, Cllr Sade Bright.

5.4 It was considered and endorsed by the Executive Team at its meeting on 22 June 2023.

6. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Gina James, Finance business Partner

6.1 The report does not have direct financial implications, however, as there is heavy reliance on external funding, it means the service needs to consistently explore other sources of funding to enable the priorities and targets for employment support to be achieved. In the event funding is not secured, or insufficient, it can potentially have a knock on effect on existing budgets.

7. Legal Implications

Implications completed by

7.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

8. Other Implications

8.1 **Risk Management** – There is an ongoing need to manage risks relating to funding and sustainability of the Council's economic development and employment programmes – particularly where they support vulnerable groups. Fundraising and scoping of opportunities are conducted on an ongoing basis to mitigate these risks.

8.2 **Corporate Policy and Equality Impact** - Improving employment outcomes among disadvantaged communities is key to meeting commitments in the 2023-26 Corporate Plan to support residents to access secure employment and ensure they benefit from growth and regeneration. The Inclusive Economy, Employment and Skills service drives this work and supports the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty by:

- Supporting access to lifelong learning and employment support for diverse communities across the borough – with targeted outreach, engagement and programmes to support groups and communities with lower employment levels including those from Black, Asian and Multi-ethnic communities to upskill and access employment support and opportunities in growth sectors.
- Improving employment support and opportunities for people with more complex needs including those with disabilities and caring responsibilities (affecting women in particular).
- Creating structured pathways into good jobs for young people (who are disadvantaged in the labour market when compared to older and more experienced workers) through the food and film sector programmes in particular.
- Promoting the London Living Wage and improving pay and progression in local school catering and social care services – sectors dominated by women doing skilled work that is undervalued.

8.3 **Safeguarding Adults and Children** – The Inclusive Economy, Employment and Skills service is supporting work to improve the wellbeing of vulnerable adults and reduce inequalities through targeted programmes to improve employment outcomes for people with learning disabilities, mental health conditions, and those struggling with the cost of living.

8.4 **Health Issues** – The Inclusive Economy, Employment and Skills service is supporting an increasing number of people with mental and physical health issues to move towards sustainable employment. This will increase their resilience to economic shocks.

8.5 **Crime and Disorder Issues** – The job brokerage and NEETs teams work with the Youth Offending team to improve employment opportunities for young offenders. Access to secure employment can reduce the risk of re-offending.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

- None

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 Inclusive Economic, Employment and Skills – overview of structure approach