

Draft London Borough of Barking & Dagenham & Support for the unemployed

Aims

This report sets out the key issues for the local authority in terms of supporting unemployed residents in accessing jobs. The key aims are to:

- enable those excluded from local and regional opportunities to access learning and employment
- raise the incomes of local people
- enable local employers to recruit the people they need.

Recommendations

1. The Council should explicitly recognise that supporting unemployed and low skilled residents is a regeneration priority through the contribution it can make towards raising incomes and thereby tackling social exclusion.
2. The Council should as a matter of standard practice incorporate appropriate employment/training conditions in all major contracts, having reference to best practice elsewhere.
3. As a matter of standard practice all procurement activities should demonstrate how they have considered the potential for developing local businesses to supply goods and services to the Council. The process should also be used to promote local recruitment initiatives.
4. The Council should pro-actively work to ensure that wherever possible local jobs are promoted as opportunities to local people, for example through projects such as JOBNET and the Welfare to Work for Disabled People. This should also consider the potential for pre-employment training activities.
5. All organisations looking to expand or locate in the borough should be informed of the Council's commitment to local recruitment.
6. There is a need to support work with partners to ensure the development of recruitment and training infrastructure in the public and voluntary sectors.
7. All projects impacting upon employment/training issues should automatically be referred to officers overseeing this area of work for comment so that the Council can develop a co-ordinated approach.
8. The Council should consider training and employment initiatives as a competing priority for the use of section 106 planning gain monies.
9. Existing support through the provision of basic skills, IT and ESOL needs to be kept under review in terms of accessibility and needs to be linked in to all training and employment initiatives.
10. The Council should look to develop initiatives that support key industry sectors (beginning with construction) and priority groups (beginning with disabled people).

1. Introduction

1.1 This draft strategy sets out key issues for the local authority in terms of supporting unemployed residents in accessing jobs. In particular it provides:

- a rationale for local authority involvement
- an analysis of the unemployed and economically active of working age
- an outline of the range of existing initiatives impacting upon unemployed residents in the borough and
- recommendations for future action.

1.2 This document should be viewed in conjunction with the accompanying workforce development strategy, which addresses issues surrounding the support that the local authority might look to provide for those already in employment. Together they address key issues for the local authority in how and why it should be involved in labour market interventions.

1.3 It should be acknowledged at the outset that the bulk of support provided to the unemployed is delivered through Job Centre Plus. There are a range of New Deal initiatives, some voluntary, that look to tackle the barriers to employment faced by specific groups. The purpose of this paper is to acknowledge that, while Job Centre Plus should rightly be seen as the main source of support to unemployed residents, the community leadership role of the local authority, its purchasing power and regulatory role provide it with opportunities to significantly add value to New Deal initiatives. If this is to be possible then an initial part of the Council's work on employability will need to establish the success of New Deal initiatives locally.¹

1.4 Additionally, a key factor in supporting people into work which is not explicitly addressed relates to the availability of local, affordable childcare places. The role of the Council in this is crucial and this area warrants further detailed analysis on its own.

2. Reasons for local authority involvement

2.1 The Local Government Act 2000 has placed a duty on local authorities to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their areas. The key overarching document concerning economic development and regeneration for the borough is the regeneration strategy. All work undertaken by regeneration staff needs to make some contribution towards delivering the aims and objectives set out in this document.

¹ The Audit Commission, in *Economic Regeneration Performance Indicators: Detailed Definitions* (March 2003), recommends the local collection of figures on the proportion of those registering for New Deal who are in employment or education six and 12 months later.

2.2 The key issues in this area are set out in the strategy under education and skills² where the aims and relevant actions include:

- removing the barriers currently preventing groups within the community from taking up learning opportunities.
- providing the highest quality training in locations that are easily accessible to all residents.
- promote access to the labour market by residents who are excluded from it.
- enable local residents to access job opportunities which are available or will arise in the future at all levels, not just in low positions.
- encourage and develop the voluntary sector capacity to deliver learning and training projects.
- encourage local employers to provide high quality work-based training which allows residents to progress their careers throughout their working lives.

2.3 The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy looks to add value in this area³ and has as key priorities:⁴

- to support engagement of those who need to be encouraged to return to learning and hard to reach groups to enhance their employment prospects.
- to improve the skills base within the borough by improving take up of basic skills training and encourage further training and higher education.
- to raise basic skills levels to enable local people to realise their potential in the labour market to increase their incomes and choice of jobs.
- to improve the supply of local labour that is trained to support existing and new businesses.

2.4 At a general level it is clear that the government sees work as an important instrument in tackling social exclusion. For this reason alone workforce development initiatives are worthy of local authority support and in accordance with the overarching aims of the regeneration strategy, not least through helping to raise the incomes of local residents. Section 6 sets out some key ways in which the local authority can have an impact in this area, through its position as a major procurer of goods and services and regulatory role in the planning system, as well as through its role as a major employer in its own right.

2.5 Each of these areas provide opportunities for the local authority to have an impact on local unemployment and, crucially, the skills of residents. Whilst unemployment is relatively low when compared with inner London boroughs the promotion of local employment initiatives can provide a key tool to tackle social exclusion in the borough.

² London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (2001), *An Urban Renaissance in East London*, pp12-13.

³ The section below outlines some NRF-funded projects that are relevant.

⁴ London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (2002), *Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy 2001-2004*.

2.6 The Council is well placed to co-ordinate activities in partnership with other agencies, building on the work of Job Centre Plus. It is also worth emphasising that there are a range of funding streams that support such activity, most notably those run by the London Development Agency (LDA) and Learning and Skills Council London East (LSCLE).

2.7 The promotion of local employment for local residents also has a number of other benefits, not least of which is that this minimises the pressures on the transport system and thereby contributes towards sustainable development. Reduced travel times can also improve the quality of life for employees. Recruiting locally also ensures that the workforce better reflects the local area and hence is more responsive in terms of service delivery.

2.8 For these reasons the Council should explicitly recognise that supporting unemployed and low skilled residents is a regeneration priority through the contribution it can make towards raising incomes and thereby tackling social exclusion.

3. Local unemployment

3.1 The accompanying workforce development strategy, which looked at support for those already in employment, contained a range of information about the low skills base of local residents. It also included historic information on unemployment in the borough, showing that over the period 1996-2002 the level of unemployment has been consistently above that in London as a whole.

3.2 While unemployment in Barking and Dagenham has not historically been as high as in Inner London, nevertheless there are pockets in the borough where the figures are comparable. Table 1 below shows the number and rates of ward level unemployment in May 2003, indicating that there were 3,408 claimants, a rate of 5.2% in that month, a figure which is just above that for Greater London (5.1%). At ward level the highest rates were seen in Gascoigne (10.3%), Abbey (8.3%) and Thames (7.9%).

3.3 The fact that there are wards where unemployment is high is emphasised when looking at male unemployment, which reached 12.5% in Gascoigne. Rates were also high in Thames (9.8%), Abbey (9.8%), Cambell (7.1%), Village (6.9%), Heath (6.9%) and Fanshawe (6.2%). The highest rates for men were in the youngest age groups, these being 16-19 (11.4%) and 20-24 (7.2%). Over a third of claimants (36.8%) had been unemployed for over six months and of these a total of 530 (15.6%) had been unemployed for over a year.

3.4 It is clear that for some groups and in some wards unemployment is a major problem even when, relatively speaking, this is not the case for the

borough as a whole. This is also the case for groups where data is not always readily available at the local level but who are known to suffer higher than average unemployment rates. This would include people with disabilities, black and ethnic minority communities, lone parents, homeless people and ex-offenders, among others. There is a need for a local assessment of the needs of these groups, with the latest Census providing much useful data in the near future.

Table 1: Claimant count unemployment by ward, May 2003⁵

Ward	N	%
Abbey	374	8.3
Alibon	142	5.6
Cambell	245	5.8
Chadwell Heath	143	3.3
Eastbrook	133	2.9
Eastbury	110	4.2
Fanshawe	195	5.3
Gascoigne	372	10.3
Goresbrook	134	4.3
Heath	226	5.4
Longbridge	124	3.0
Manor	107	4.3
Marks Gate	41	3.7
Parsloes	150	5.2
River	157	4.7
Thames	194	7.9
Triptons	142	3.5
Valence	149	4.0
Village	270	6.0
LBB&D	3,408	5.2
<i>Greater London</i>		<i>5.1</i>

3.5 It should also be noted that the figures above relate to the claimant count. This is an administrative count of the number unemployed and receiving benefits rather than a true measure of the number of people without work but seeking employment. The wider ILO⁶ measure, which is also preferred by central government, showed that unemployment in Barking and Dagenham⁷ was 6.4% over March 2001 to February 2002, compared to a London rate of 6.6%.

⁵ GLA/ONS claimant count figures. It should be noted that these are calculated on the basis of 1991 boundaries and do not include Becontree.

⁶ International Labour Organization. This measure is based on those looking and able to take up work within a specified period of time and is unrelated to benefit receipt.

⁷ Over this period the claimant count rate ranged between 4.1% and 4.6%.

3.6 This difference in the administrative count and the ILO rate of unemployment is also emphasised when looking at recipients of Incapacity Benefit (IB)⁸ who are of working age and many of whom will look to return to employment. In August 1999, when there were 3,494 unemployment claimants there were 7,625 claimants of incapacity benefit. Research confirms that individuals moving on to IB see “many advantages to working, including economic reasons and to avoid boredom, depression or feeling isolated ... [but] faced a number of inter-relating barriers imposed by their health and other factors, such as skills and experience, lack of confidence and motivation”.⁹

3.7 It is also crucial to appreciate that unemployment does not represent a stock measure. Throughout the year there is a continuous flow into and out of unemployment. Given the low level of skills in the resident workforce it is apparent that there is an opportunity for the local authority to make an impact in terms of supporting residents into employment that contains a component of upskilling. The London Skills Survey¹⁰ confirmed that respondents with the lowest levels of qualifications have the longest unemployment spells, and it is also the case that they suffer more frequent bouts of unemployment. This has particular relevance to Barking and Dagenham, given the relatively low skills base of residents.

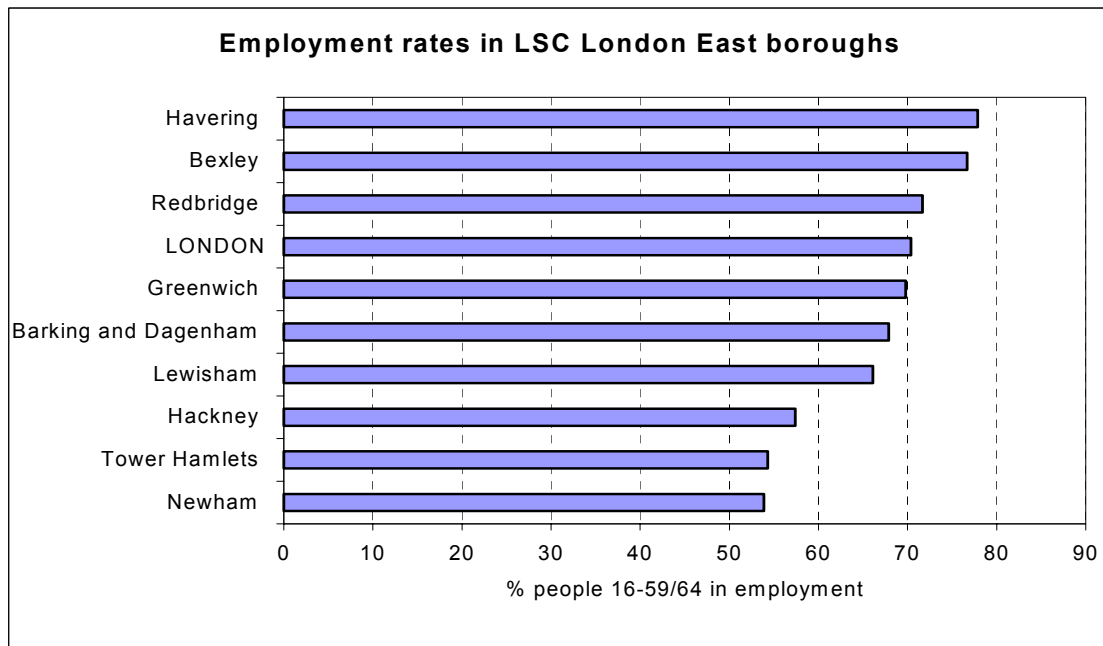
3.8 A useful comparative measure that accounts for all forms of economic inactivity, including the numbers on IB, is the proportion of the population aged 16-59/64 in employment. The chart below shows figures on this measure for the LSC London East area boroughs and for London as a whole. This reveals that 67.9% of people in this age group are in employment in Barking and Dagenham, leaving the borough middle-placed in London East. However, this rate is 2.5% below the London rate of 70.4% and of the Outer London boroughs only Brent had a lower proportion of people in employment.

⁸ This is paid to those of working age with sufficient National Insurance contributions who have exhausted Statutory Sick Pay and are incapable of work because of sickness or disability.

⁹ Department for Work and Pensions (2001), *Moving between sickness and work*, p2 (DWP Research Report No. 151).

¹⁰ London Skills Forecasting Unit (2002), *London Skills Survey 2001*.

Chart 1



Research findings

3.9 In developing responses to local skills and employment issues recent research findings provide some important information that will need to be considered. The London Skills Survey¹¹ found that almost half of unemployed people (47%) believed that the main reason for unemployment was the lack of either suitable or available job opportunities, while a further 13% considered that they lacked the relevant skills, qualifications or experience. Additionally the survey found a strong correlation between the previous occupation of the unemployed and the areas in which they are seeking work. Action in this area by the local authority could therefore help to expand the effective supply of local jobs along with training and upskilling components.

3.10 Some issues relevant to the demand for labour are revealed by the London Employers Survey. This found that the majority of jobs growth (55%)¹² was to be found in firms employing less than 10 employees, indicating the need to successfully engage with this sector of the business community. The survey also found that word of mouth was the most important recruitment channel to employers, with twice as many employing this mechanism than the Job Centre

¹¹ London Skills Forecasting Unit (2002), *London Skills Survey 2001*, p27.

¹² London Skills Forecasting Unit (2002), *The Competitiveness and Skills of the London Economy: The results of the Employers' Survey 2000*, p38.

(35% against 18%).¹³ Again these factors have implications for the types of projects that should be supported.

4. Local services & initiatives

4.1 There are currently a range of sources of support outside of Job Centre Plus available to local unemployed people in the borough in relation to finding employment or upskilling them for work. It is clear that literacy, numeracy and ESOL skills are critical in finding and retaining employment. The local authority supports these in a range of ways, most notably through the Adult Basic Skills Initiative, Barking and Dagenham Training Services and the Adult College of Barking and Dagenham. There are also projects in these areas that have received funding from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) and the LDA. Due to its crucial importance **basic skills provision (including IT and ESOL) needs to be kept under review in terms of accessibility and linked in to all training and employment initiatives.** External funding can play a key role in further developing existing good practice within the borough.

4.2 In addition the Learndirect initiative in the East Thames area¹⁴ delivers a substantial number of basic skills courses in a variety of settings. A range of advice and guidance services is also available through Neighbourhood Learning Centres: UK Online centres, funded through the Department for Education and Skills and managed by DEAL and the Learning Village network, which is SRB funded and the responsibility of Barking College.

4.3 The important point to recognise from these is that it is vital that initiatives supported in this area can link into schemes that have employment objectives in terms of getting local people into local jobs. It is also clear that the provision of basic skills training should form a component of any training initiative as a matter of good practice.

4.4 The Appendix to this report outlines some of the key initiatives and organisations delivering services supporting unemployed people. They include a range of activities and many are still in the process establishing their presence in the borough. This strategy and the accompanying Workforce Development Strategy indicate that, while there is much going on focusing on the skills and employment agendas, the activities are far from comprehensive. The potential for greater impact is apparent when this is viewed in conjunction with the various funding streams that can support these activities.

4.5 In addition, the links between the projects and activities are in many ways not well developed or co-ordinated, if only for the reason that many are still being

¹³ London Skills Forecasting Unit (2002), *ibid*, p45.

¹⁴ This is known as the East Thames Hub and covers Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge.

established. There is much work that is undertaken within the voluntary and community sectors that is currently not well mapped, although the sector itself is currently taking a lead in tackling this problem. The potential to develop work in this area and ultimately to link unemployed residents in to accredited training opportunities or employment with an upskilling component clearly exists. A prerequisite to this is the mapping of opportunities on an ongoing basis.

5. Some responses in other London boroughs

5.1 This section briefly outlines some of the sources of support given to unemployed residents in four other London boroughs. They have a wide spread of unemployment rates and are therefore useful comparators. Bexley has an ILO unemployment rate (2.6%)¹⁵ well below that in Barking and Dagenham, Waltham Forest (6.9%) and Greenwich (7.4%) have fairly comparable rates while that in Brent (9.4%) is clearly above the corresponding figure in Barking and Dagenham.

5.2 *Bexley* utilises SRB funding to support a range of specialist training activities for manufacturing businesses. This includes grants towards training and the commissioning and delivery of short training courses in areas such as fork lift driving, first aid and stores management. Much of this supports individuals already in employment but through this activity there is direct work with employers in the borough. Despite a very low level of unemployment the borough uses these and other links to support a local labour scheme that helps unemployed residents access employment opportunities. Bexley is a Beacon Council in the area of support for businesses of which this work forms a part.

5.3 *Waltham Forest* has a dedicated Employment and Training Group. The work of this group supports a Vocational Training Initiative that delivers a range of pre-vocational taster courses and training at NVQ Levels 2 and 3 with an emphasis on care, childcare and IT and business administration. This receives local authority funding that is matched with SRB, ESF and other external funding and provides benefits, travel costs plus a small allowance for trainees recruited from among the long-term unemployed.

5.4 The local authority also supports the Leyton and Walthamstow Job Banks which provide a range of support services to unemployed residents in the borough's most deprived wards, including linking with employers moving into the borough or already based there to aid in their recruitment activities. The job brokerage role played by the job banks is very similar to that shortly to be offered by JOBNET in Barking and Dagenham and has operated successfully over a number of years.

¹⁵ Rates relate to the period March 2001 to February 2002. The figure for Bexley is a rough estimate.

5.5 *Greenwich* supports a local labour scheme designed to maximise job opportunities for local people and to secure business opportunities for local companies. This is funded by the local authority and a range of other external sources including SRB and ESF. The scheme offers job opportunities and skills matching, paid work experience, help with CV preparation, training for specific employment opportunities and a range of other services helping local people into local jobs.

5.6 *Brent* has a Social Inclusion Unit whose SRB-funded work focuses on assisting residents in the Harlesden area to overcome barriers to employment. The Unit undertakes a range of functions: it commissions a range of training, provides work placements with local employers along with a training bursary of £150 per week, gives help with childcare costs, interview techniques and the production of CVs. It also provides grants to voluntary sector organisations that provide similar services to support unemployed residents.

5.7 The common theme from the above boroughs is that there are dedicated teams or units working on the area of employment and skills and work appears well co-ordinated. This strategy and the accompanying one focusing on upskilling those already in employment represent in effect the first steps in developing a coherent approach in Barking and Dagenham. **It is clear that to develop a co-ordinated approach all projects impacting upon employment/training issues should automatically be referred to specified council officers for comment.**

6. Areas for future action

6.1 The introduction to this report outlined the key areas where the local authority has the opportunity to have an impact on local skills and employment, mentioning its role as a procurer of services, its regulatory role within the planning system and the fact that it is a major employer in its own right. These are addressed briefly in turn.

Achieving community benefits through contracts

6.2 Recent research conducted on behalf of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has concluded that “contrary to common perceptions, the inclusion of community benefits in procurement is not prohibited by either the Government’s policy or the EC rules”.¹⁶ Subject to certain caveats, therefore, **the Council should include employment/training conditions in contracts as a matter of standard practice.** Where there are best value considerations, the report makes clear, “community benefit matters (including labour force matters) may become a part of best value procurement where they are supported in the

¹⁶ Macfarlane, R. and Cook, M. (2002), *Achieving community benefits through contracts: law, policy and practice*, p1 (Joseph Rowntree Foundation Findings December 2002).

Community Strategy, Best Value Procurement Plans or other significant policy statements”.¹⁷

6.3 It is apparent that a commitment to the above would need the active involvement of officers dealing with procurement and legal affairs and the inclusion of employment and training considerations in the plans mentioned. However, given the necessary commitment the next stage is to move on to practical considerations and best practice elsewhere, for example at what stage of the tendering process these requirements are placed. There are existing examples¹⁸ of how planning obligations in construction that include a contribution towards construction training and the requirement for contractors to take reasonable steps to make training placements available can be implemented. This includes detailed information on, for example, the number of training weeks that can be expected from contracts dependent on the scale of the development.

6.4 While the examples have been focussed on construction, there is no reason why activities should be restricted to that area of employment. **The Council should consider training and employment initiatives as a competing priority for the use of section 106 planning gain monies** to support local activities. It should not be assumed that work in this area will meet resistance. Another JRF report found that “developers interviewed felt that such agreements were good public relations and also helped address concerns about skill shortages”.¹⁹

6.5 If the options listed above are considered, then at the same time it is also essential to recognise and take action on the supply side. This requires the promotion of employment opportunities, pre-employment training and job matching, among other things. As a JRF report outlined, “providing appropriate recruitment and training programmes and a rapid job-matching service are important for achieving success”.²⁰ It is clear that **there is a need to work with partners to ensure the development of recruitment and training infrastructure in the public and voluntary sectors** to give the aims set out in this strategy practical expression.

6.6 Even at a basic level there is much that can be done to ensure that local businesses and employees benefit from the purchasing power of the local authority. For example, as part of a European-funded project procurement officers from the local authority have taken local businesses through all aspects of the procurement process. This kind of activity needs to be supported and

¹⁷ Macfarlane, R. and Cook, M. (2002), *ibid*, p3.

¹⁸ West London Construction Training Planning Forum (2002), *Best Practice Guidelines for Construction Training Opportunities on Commercial, Regeneration and Housing Association Development Schemes*.

¹⁹ Macfarlane, R. (2000), *Using planning agreements to reduce social exclusion*, p1 (Joseph Rowntree Foundation Findings March 2000)

²⁰ Macfarlane, R. (2000), *Local labour in construction: tackling social exclusion and skill shortages*, p1 (Joseph Rowntree Foundation Findings November 2000).

developed on an ongoing basis and **all procurement activities should demonstrate how they have considered the potential for developing local businesses to supply goods and services to the Council.**

6.7 In addition it is reasonable that at a minimum **all businesses looking to locate within the borough who have some contact with planning or regeneration staff or the networks in which they are involved should be informed of the local authority's support for local recruitment initiatives** and the assistance that can be provided by projects or organisations within the borough.

Local authority employment

6.8 The local authority is, of course, a significant employer within the borough and, through its recruitment practices, can have a direct impact on employment. The Council have recently agreed that vacancy data be forwarded to JOBNET and that there should if possible be a corporate presence at that project's launch and other events. It is also expected that in due course similar joint work will be undertaken with the co-ordinator of the welfare to work for disabled people project. However, **there needs to be a clear commitment to ensure that local jobs are promoted as opportunities for local people wherever practicable, including through the provision of pre-employment training.** Both of the projects above are good starting points. Monitoring data over time will establish whether this is having a positive impact in terms of local employment.

7. Conclusion

7.1 It would fair to conclude that across the board there is a recognition that local regeneration and mainstream funding should benefit local people in terms of allowing them to develop their skills and to secure local employment. To take a recent local example, the Dagenham Dock Vision Implementation Strategy has among its aims "encouraging local employment, involving local people, schools, colleges and universities in education and training".²¹ The document also makes clear that there is a possible net employment gain in this area of around 3,000 jobs.

7.2 However, it is not clear how this aim is to have practical expression other than through local people incidentally applying for and obtaining jobs. It is clear that this must be directly addressed, since as recent research work has shown there can be "a relatively high incidence of hard-to-fill and skill-shortage vacancies co-existing alongside relatively high unemployment levels in some

²¹ London Borough of Barking and Dagenham/London Development Agency (2002), *Dagenham Dock Vision Implementation Strategy: Executive Summary*, p3.

metropolitan areas,²² with this already said to apply to the LSCLE area. **The Council therefore needs to commit itself to actively engaging on this agenda through its contracting and regulatory roles, through its position as a major employer and through its crucial role in leading local partnership activities.**

7.3 There are a range of funding sources for projects to run in the borough, not least those funded by Learning and Skills Council London East and the London Development Agency. The latter has recently aided the establishment of a London Riverside Action Group that is assessing potential developments in Barking and Dagenham and Havering. This in turn has a skills and employment sub-group on which the Council are represented, along with Havering, Job Centre Plus, LSC London East and others.

7.4 The group is looking to ensure that developments in London Riverside and the wider Thames Gateway benefit residents across the whole of both boroughs, both employed and unemployed. It is currently working towards the development of a Skills and Employment Programme Development Framework, with the ultimate aim of commissioning projects in the area and for which the LDA has a dedicated budget. The aims set out in this are in accord with the aims in this document. **However, even if this were not the case the Council could have significant impact through the activities outlined in this strategy which are in accord with the commitment to tackling social exclusion.**

7.5 The issue of skills for both the employed and unemployed has moved further up the national agenda and a national skills strategy to be published shortly is expected to rationalise some £2 billion worth of training initiatives. There is also an emerging network of Sector Skills Councils which are developing skills assessments of their respective industries and which should inform the development of future projects in the borough.

7.6 The Council should acknowledge that, in order to make a real contribution towards tackling social exclusion, successful co-ordination and practical implementation of the issues outlined will require additional financial and human resources.

7.7 In addition to the various recommendations set out in this report **the Council should also look to work with partners to develop initiatives that support the key industry sectors** identified by LSC London East²³:

- construction (this should be a priority given the anticipated physical regeneration in Barking Reach and South Dagenham)

²² Institute for Employment Research, *Exploring Local Areas, Skills and Unemployment: Exploratory Data Analysis at Local Area Level*, p3 (Department for Education and Skills Research Brief RBX 06-02).

²³ There are already local activities that have begun this, for example, Barking Lifelong Learning Centre and the Gateway to Health and Social Care.

- cultural and creative industries
- financial and business services
- health and care
- hospitality and catering
- manufacturing
- transport and logistics
- public administration
- retail
- voluntary and community.

7.8 The Council should also seek to resource cross-cutting research into the local learning and employment needs of key priority groups disadvantaged in the jobs market. Among these are:

- people with disabilities (this should be the priority given existing work and the numbers of residents potentially affected)
- lone parents
- black and minority ethnic groups
- men over 50
- young people
- ex-offenders
- refugees and asylum seekers
- homeless people
- drug and alcohol users

This would again allow the identification and development of initiatives and allow the Council to proactively engage with the agendas of key funders such as LSC London East and the LDA.

Support for the unemployed in Barking and Dagenham

Project/organisation	Description of activities
<i>Barking & Dagenham Training Services (B&DTS)</i>	<p>This is part of the Department of Education, Arts and Libraries and offers a variety of opportunities to young people aged 16-25, including Modern Apprenticeships, NVQs and lifeskills courses funded by LSC London East. Among the vocational courses are construction, painting and decorating, care and early years care and education. B&DTS offers help and support to local businesses that want to train and employ young people and training for unemployed young people to help them secure employment. Some trainees on Modern Apprenticeship programmes are given placements through the Housing and Health Department. All learners have access to basic skills and ESOL support as appropriate to their needs and programme. B&DTS also works in partnerships with local care and early years employers to provide NVQ training and assessment to their employees that are aged 25+ and outside of the LSC funding remit.</p> <p>While the focus of recent national strategies has been on Level 2 and 3 qualifications B&DTS also provides crucial support to young people below these levels. The foundation level and life skills courses that are run need to continue to be recognised as valuable by the local authority and external funders. These courses are available to potentially disaffected young people who may not achieve Level 2 qualifications, giving them an attachment to the labour market, among other things.</p>
<i>Adult College of Barking and Dagenham</i>	<p>The Adult College, supported by the local authority, runs a range of courses that have relevance to jobs and employment although the latter is not the College's focus. These include basic skills courses, some available free to women returners, IT courses and vocational courses in counselling and pre-school practice, among others.</p>

<i>Renew Friends</i>	The local authority has supported a successful bid for Objective 2 ²⁴ European Social Fund (ESF) monies, matched by LDA funding, that will provide opportunities for unemployed residents to obtain an NVQ Level 2 in Electrical and Electronic Servicing. This will involve them in the recycling of a range of 'white goods' which can then be offered for resale across London and further afield.
<i>JOBNET</i>	The JOBNET project is funded by the Heart of Thames Gateway and will shortly be launching in the borough. It will look to provide a job brokerage service to people either looking for a job or a change of work, including the provision of pre-employment training. It will have a team of professional advisers who will help people to make contact with local employers and training providers, produce a CV, prepare for an interview and improve their skills. It will have an outreach element and attempt to develop links with employers to ensure that they register jobs and look to recruit locally.
<i>ESOL Plus</i>	The local authority has recently recruited an ESOL Development Officer, funded through NRF and monies from the LDA. The key task for this individual is initially to map the range of provision available in the borough, and to commission training to fill in any gaps. The project will also look to ensure that individuals benefiting from training can secure employment.
<i>Gateway to Health and Social Care</i>	NRF is funding the establishment of a project in the borough that will look to enable local people to access jobs in the health and social care sector. A co-ordinator will develop the project further and promote career options in this sector to school pupils in the borough, as well as the local community. Although there is at present no direct training provision the activities of the project will be co-ordinated with the work of the others outlined here. It is hoped that in due course external funding will allow a much higher level of activity, including work promoting the project within the sector itself.

²⁴ Objective 2 status is given to areas facing structural decline. In Barking and Dagenham the pre-boundary change wards of Goresbrook, River and Thames are covered.

<i>Social Services</i>	As well as supporting the Osborne Partnership the Social Services Department has participated in the WORKSTEP programme obtaining a contract with the then Department of Employment. This subsidises six visually impaired people to work in Sheltered Workshops out of the borough. The Department has also provided a number of sheltered employment placements in various Barking and Dagenham departments offering subsidised employment opportunities to disabled people, although there is only one placement on the programme currently. A welfare to work co-ordinator, funded through NRF, will provide a focus for initiatives in this area.
<i>Information Advice Guidance</i>	The East Thames Information Advice Guidance (IAG) service, funded through the LSC, offers free information and advice on learning and work opportunities through a network of local venues in the borough. This includes one-to-one work with an adviser that can include help in designing a CV, filling in an application form and preparing for an interview. A recent evaluation of East Thames IAG noted that “by re-stimulating discouraged workers, realigning the demand and supply of labour and increasing the efficiency of job search, guidance has been able to reduce unemployment”. ²⁵ While not directly providing training or a route into employment it is apparent that the IAG service needs to be closely linked into to all activity that does accomplish these ends.
<i>Barking Lifelong Learning Centre</i>	The centre, when finished, will provide a borough based facility for the provision of learning, focussed on public services (health, social care, education and public sector administration). Among the related aims are to provide a one stop facility for enhancing employability and to provide the core base from which to feed learners to employers and other educational and support organisations. The Centre will act as a base for some the projects outlined above.
<i>Connexions</i>	The London East Connexions Partnership has a local management group overseeing services to young people in the borough, delivered through a range of personal advisers. One of its key priorities is to reduce the number of 16-18 year olds not engaged in education, training or employment. The Council’s Youth Support and Development Service is a key partner.

²⁵ East Thames IAG (2002), *September 2002 Evaluation of the East Thames IAG*, p5.

<p><i>Voluntary sector</i></p>	<p>There are a range of services provided by voluntary organisations in the borough that assist unemployed residents to gain skills or training that can be valuable in accessing employment opportunities. Providers include organisations such as the Disablement Association of Barking and Dagenham (DABD) and Lifeline Community Projects, which provide training in a range of areas as well as acting as community venues for Learndirect. The Osborne Partnership has an employment network that looks to place people with learning disabilities in employment and training opportunities, while the Volunteer Bureau provides opportunities that can lead to employment. Harmony House has also long been a provider of courses, particularly to refugees and asylum seekers, among others.</p> <p>Voluntary organisations have the advantage of being ‘closest’ to the most disadvantaged groups and several of the smallest organisations in the borough were recently successful in obtaining ESF funds from the Association of London Government under their <i>Fast Forward Grants</i> programme. Another ESF project, led by the local authority²⁶ will look to build capacity in these and other voluntary sector groups so that they can more effectively contribute towards tackling unemployment and social exclusion. The Council has also secured funding from the LDA to establish a network of voluntary sector training providers in the borough.</p> <p>NRF funding has been made available to DABD to recruit a Welfare to Work Co-ordinator whose role will be to draw together relevant information and partners interested in ensuring that people with disabilities are able to obtain and keep well paid employment. A steering group for this project includes a range of local partners, including the local authority.</p>
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²⁶ Empowering the Voluntary Sector. The project manager is line managed by the director of Barking and Dagenham Council for Voluntary Service.