



## ***Hodge Hill District***

### ***Neighbourhood Challenge Report – 2015/16*** ***Theme: “Youth Unemployment”***

**Member Champion:**  
**Lead Officer:**

Cllr Mariam Khan  
Mike Davis



## **1. Introduction from Councillor Mariam Khan, Employment Champion, Hodge Hill District.**

“At its Annual General Meeting in May 2015, Birmingham City Council gave a new responsibility to the ten District Committee’s to undertake a “Neighbourhood Challenge.” This involves putting the spotlight on a district issue affecting local residents and exploring ways to improve the experiences of local people.

The Hodge Hill District Committee agreed, in November 2015, to use the new powers available to it to undertake a challenge exercise into:

*“Youth Unemployment – challenges and opportunities within Hodge Hill District.”*

I am grateful to the council officers and district partners who gave evidence to support the Hodge Hill Neighbourhood Challenge and also to the District Members who participated in the visit to the Washwood Heath Job Centre on 24 February 2016 and attended a special informal session at The Pump, Tile Cross on 17 March 2016 to help to review the evidence and agree recommendations around the youth employment theme.

Having progressed this far with our Neighbourhood Challenge exercise we must continue to work with partners and providers to bring about the improvements desired and ensure we receive updates at District Committee in the coming year.“

## **2. Purpose of the Neighbourhood Challenge**

Birmingham City Council received a review of its overall governance and performance from a team led by Lord Kerslake (former Head of the Civil Service) in 2014 and there were a series of recommendations arising from this review. One of the recommendations of the Kerslake Review was that:

*‘The Government should support the creation of a new locally-led high powered partnership vehicle focussed on **increasing employment and improving skills, starting in the most deprived parts of Birmingham.....**’*

Hodge Hill District Members already recognized the employment and skills challenges faced by local residents and especially young people. Youth unemployment rates in the four Wards that make up the District are amongst the highest in the city. Many young people appear to lack the skills, training opportunities and qualifications to progress on the pathway to employment and face barriers that may not be experienced by young people in other parts of Birmingham.

The Neighbourhood Challenge exercise aims to assist the Council, Department for Works and Pensions, Job Centre and other stakeholders to improve the prospects for young people in Hodge Hill District. It considers best practice and aims to maximize the *resources already available*. It will

also enable Members and officers to gain a better understanding of the overall situation and the experiences of local residents.

### **3.Key Questions for our Neighbourhood Challenge Exercise**

A list of key questions for the challenge exercise was developed with district members as follows:

- *How can we better engage with young people within the district?*
- *Are there any barriers that stop young people going to the Job Centres?*
- *What additional support is needed around training skills and employment?*
- *Are there any gaps in provision?*
- *What are the opportunities for young people in Hodge Hill, e.g. colleges / training providers / National College for High Speed Rail?*
- *Are there any issues with connectivity within the District and beyond to access opportunities?*
- *Who are the main employers in the District, and how can we better engage with businesses?*
- *How can we work with schools to improve careers advice and guidance?*

### **4. Methodology for conducting the Neighbourhood Challenge**

Firstly an up to date analysis of employment and skills related data, including statistics on youth unemployment in Hodge Hill District, was undertaken by the BCC Employment Team at the request of the District Head. This statistical analysis, accurate to November 2015, is presented as a Powerpoint presentation in Appendix 1 of this report.

In addition, a number of key partners were identified and the District Head carried out a series of visits and interviews in February and March 2016 with those partners to consider the above questions agreed with Members. A record of those interviews and the evidence given is also appended to this report.

The District Employment Champion, in conjunction with the District Head, arranged a visit for Members to the local Washwood Heath Job Centre to enable Members to better understand the service offered to local people seeking employment support and the experiences they have within the Job Centre setting.

Finally, once the evidence was assembled, a District Members meeting was held at The Pump, Tile Cross on 17 March to review the evidence assembled and crucially to develop a set of recommendations designed to encourage future improvement to the way local services operate or to add value to the existing arrangements.

## **5. Findings:**

### **(a) What Works Well**

- District Members appreciated the opportunity to visit the local Job Centre and to observe and better understand the advice and support available via 'Work Coaches.' Members value having a local Job Centre point of contact in order to resolve resident issues should they arise.
- District Members recognized the contribution made by many partners working to provide support packages to local young people across the district. It is appreciated that many partners go above and beyond the contractual requirements of certain funded programmes in order to provide young people with the support and assistance they need.
- The role of third sector organisations was acknowledged as increasingly important in this time of shrinking resources faced by the statutory partners (BCC and DWP).
- The importance of maximizing existing opportunities for young people to be 'mentored' by means of existing voluntary support networks such as faith groups, youth workers, family and friends. Young people benefit greatly from the input of a role model or mentor to have a positive influence on their lives.
- The central role of schools within the district was acknowledged and the commitment and dedication of teachers to providing young people with the best possible start in life in what are often very challenging circumstances.

### **(b) What Needs Improving:**

- At 7.3% Hodge Hill District has the highest youth unemployment proportion of all the city's districts, well above the city average of 4.6%. 995 young people aged 18-24 claim JSA or the out-of-work element of Universal Credit in Hodge Hill District.
- At 8.2% Washwood Heath Ward has the highest youth unemployment proportion of all the Hodge Hill wards and indeed it has the highest rate of youth unemployment of the 40 Wards in the whole city. Shard End has the lowest proportion (6.5%) but even this rate is the 11<sup>th</sup> highest in the city. All wards are above the city average.
- Hodge Hill has the lowest qualification levels of all the city's districts.
- 3 of Hodge Hill wards are amongst the 5 worst performing in the city for 'no qualifications' and at Level 2+ (5 GCSEs).
- A detailed set of recommendations is within the table at the end of this report and it is the intention to review progress in delivering these by means of a progress report in six months and again in 12 months.

## **6. Conclusions**

Taking into account the information supplied at interviews and visits undertaken with partners the main conclusions are as follows:

### **Engagement with Young People:**

- We need to better understand where our young people go and develop a communication strategy that includes 'riding on the back' of existing channels especially schools, youth clubs, voluntary and community groups, faith groups. Wherever young people are to be found there needs to be strengthened careers advice and guidance to reach young people. Either those organisations need to be empowered to provide it or specialist outreach providers engaged to do so.
- Need a single digital point of access for all jobs and skills related advice. The BCC digital website (COG) being developed is welcomed as it is intended this will be a one-stop digital careers shop for young people that we will need to promote.
- The district would benefit from a Jobs & Skills Co-ordinator to work with schools, colleges, job centre and local providers to co-ordinate and communicate opportunities more effectively.

### **Barriers to Young People using Job Centre**

- Young people may see as a place of sanction rather than places of support. There may be stigma attached with attendance – i.e. not wanting to be seen as failing or struggling. There may also be a lack of knowledge amongst young people as to the services on offer.
- There is a case made for running Job Centre's in a different way with a range of agencies and providers to create greater advice and guidance opportunities than Job Centre work coaches may be able to provide alone.
- Create welcoming environments; places of trust and not places to be feared. Position within 'community' rather than an arm of Central Government
- Traineeships and Employability Programmes are available but unpaid and it is a hard sell to get young people to complete without financial incentives
- Single Job Centre Provision in the district at Washwood Heath and travelling, including cost of doing so, a disincentive to attendance
- Cultural issues – such as young Asian women attending a mixed gender provision may be a barrier.

### **Gaps in Provision / Additional Support Required for Young People**

- Other than school 6<sup>th</sup> forms the district lacks big educational providers for post 16 age group. Significant budgets of around £150M for 16-18's and £80M for 19 plus with big recipients BMET, Bournville College and Southam City but these institutions have little or no presence within the

district. Need to hold them to account for how money is being spent and encourage more targeted approach to meet needs of Hodge Hill young people.

- Young people leaving school with no qualifications and low qualifications compared to elsewhere in Birmingham a serious issue. Schools are working hard to improve educational attainment but there is a need to supplement with Maths and English GCSE's post 16 and ideally in small class sizes to ensure fully supported otherwise future opportunities will be very limited for our young people. (Even a local café job advertised recently with Maths and English GCSE's essential requirements.)
- Support also required for young people:
  - With IT skills, CV and interview skills
  - With additional language needs
  - With complex health issues
  - With low confidence / self esteem
  - With unsettled home life or a history of parents not working
  - With chaotic lifestyle including drink / drugs and ASB.
- More mentors and role models needed to aid and support young people to overcome additional challenges faced.

### **What Opportunities exist in Hodge Hill for Young People?**

- There are 6<sup>th</sup> forms and some other local employment related projects but these are not always well advertised and places may be limited.
- As stated the district lacks a good sized college provision
- Apprenticeships, traineeships and employment programmes may be accessible via the Job Centre and other providers but these opportunities may require travel outside of the district.
- High Speed Rail will be a major future employer and a HS2 College is due in 2018. There is a need to find out more about the training opportunities and ultimately jobs that will be available and to ensure young people in the district understand what the entry level will be to access such opportunities. HS2 will have a significant impact on the landscape of the district and there will be mixed feelings among residents. Therefore, it is vitally important that associated HS2 training and employment opportunities prove to be a real benefit to the district and its young people in particular.

### **Are there travel and Connectivity issues for young people accessing opportunities?**

- Young people prefer to access opportunities close to home but need to be encouraged to broaden their horizons and look for opportunities further afield.
- Centro offer an assisted public transport scheme to assist unemployed young people to access job interviews without cost and whilst in employment for the first 4 weeks.

## **Employer Engagement**

- Major employers in district include police, fire and schools. Alcoa in Tile Cross, The Heartland Hospital is at the districts border and the airport is accessible as is the city centre.
- There is a need for more local work placements, apprenticeships and full and part time jobs to be identified. Encourage a 'one extra desk' approach amongst employers to provide such opportunities.
- BCC, Job Centre and partner / providers need to do more to sell the benefits to Employers of the services they each offer i.e help with recruitment.
- Need more employers to engage with schools such as a business representative on Governing Bodies and supporting careers weeks.

## **Can closer work with schools assist youth unemployment?**

- A national government Job Centre pilot is to be tested in Birmingham where 15 secondary schools will be identified to benefit from visits from JC work coaches. IT is vital that Hodge Hill schools are included within this citywide pilot.
- Schools are now accountable for delivery of careers advice to its young people and Birmingham Careers Service offer a free assessment / review to support schools with this responsibility. It is important the district builds a picture of how well schools are performing on this part of their overall business.
- Schools not obliged to look at careers advice until year 8 (12 / 13 years). Is there a case for starting earlier to demonstrate to relationship between classroom learning and future employment opportunities?
- The district would benefit from an IAG (Information advice guidance) co-ordinator to work closely with a caseload of schools to ensure consistency of approach and equality of opportunity for young people.



## 6. Recommendations

	Recommendations	Responsibility	Timescale	Sept 16 Update
<b>Engagement with Young People:</b>				
R01	Monitor progress with BCC and partners in developing a digital jobs and skills platform (COG) for the city and ensure a local Hodge Hill launch alongside a wider city launch.	BCC Employment Team / District Head	Sept 2016	Awaiting response from Margaret Way, BCC Employment Team to a request made on 11/09/16
R02	Map the existing places young people visit outside of school - youth clubs, third sector organisations including faith - and work to more effectively communicate jobs & skills opportunities	District head / local providers	Sept 2016	Awaiting response from Jan Collymore BCC Youth Service to a request made on 11/09/16
<b>Barriers to Young People Using Job Centre:</b>				
R03	Discuss Neighbourhood Challenge exercise with Job Centre and seek its views on future developments.	District head	Sept 2016	Discussion at Job centre July 2016 and on-going
<b>Gaps in Provision / Additional Support Required for Young People</b>				
R04	Work with main college providers across the city to understand what services are accessed by Hodge Hill young people and develop strategies and awareness to encourage more take up.	District Head/ Colleges	Sept 2016	Helpful statistical report made available by Birmingham City University in April 2016 confirms 3% of its enrolled students from Hodge Hill and in total around 20% from Birmingham postcodes. More work required on how to improve take-up. BCU staff are commendably supporting our challenge exercise with provision of information.
R05	Financial resources permitting work in the future with local providers to deliver a range of tailored support packages to meet the additional needs of young people with either low or no qualifications, or those with health or other complex needs	District Head / Providers	Sept 2016	Awaiting the outcome of the Youth Engagement Initiative Fund allocation as it relates to East Birmingham and Hodge Hill. Announcement expected mid Sept.
R06	Identify existing mentoring programmes and opportunities and work to raise awareness and to signpost young people to these opportunities	District Head / providers	Sept 2016	A number of local providers have Destination Work / Talent Match programmes that provide an element of mentoring and these organisations are known to Job Centre in order that referrals can be completed.
R07	Monitor progress with HS2 job opportunities and with HS2 College and work to ensure Hodge Hill residents experience the future benefits of these arrangements.	District Head	Sept 2016	Item on HH jobs & Skills group agenda 09/09/16

<b>Employer Engagement:</b>				
R08	Produce a leaflet presenting a combined employer support offer from JCP, BCC and local providers that can be used to engage employers to consider working with Hodge Hill partners around work placements, apprenticeships and jobs.	District Head / Job Centre	Sept 2016	Template leaflet obtained from neighbouring Jobs & Skills Partnership Group. Requires adaptation to Hodge Hill and discussion with partners
<b>Working with Schools around Jobs &amp; Skills</b>				
R09	Work with local secondary schools around the Government pilot for job centre work coaches to work proactively with young people in school setting and gain insight into outcomes.	Job Centre  (Antonina Robinson JCP lead)	Sept 2016	Work progressing – 4 HH schools engaging as at September 2016. Successful Work experience support delivered for International and Holy Trinity Catholic School. Summer Pilot delivered, My Choice My Future. Excellent feedback from Employers, pupils and Teaching Staff.
R10	Work with Birmingham Careers Service to understand take up within district schools of the Careers Advice assessment review offered freely by Birmingham Careers Service as well as the impact / outcomes.	District head / Bham Careers Service  (Sandra Bebb Sept 2016)	Sept 2016	There are 8 Secondary Schools and 2 Special Schools in the district.  2 have fully completed the Audit A further 6 have taken up the offer  The audit includes all aspects of Careers Advice, Information and Guidance (CIAG) in a school. Lin Hatton (Birmingham Careers Service) is the lead on CIAG quality audits for all Birmingham schools.
<b>District Jobs &amp; Skills Partnership Activity</b>				
R11	Work to sustain the recently established Hodge Hill Jobs & Skills Partnership that in time may become community led and that can also monitor the outcomes of this Neighbourhood Challenge exercise	District head / All Partners	Sept 2016	Ongoing throughout 2016. Need to review progress and set dates for further partnership meetings for 2017.
<b>Monitor and Review</b>				
R12	Review progress in delivering these recommendations by means of a progress report in six months (Sept16) and in 12 months (March 17)	District Head	Sept 216	First progress report to be delivered to 22 September district committee.

## Appendices

1. Hodge Hill Unemployment and Qualifications - Statistical Analysis
2. Notes of interviews with key partners and colleagues with special thanks to the following partners for their contributions:

- Shilpi Akbar, BCC Employment Team
- Jane Newman, BCC Employment Team
- Paul Cornick , BCC Adult Education
- Sandra Bebb, Birmingham Careers Service
- Rahul Karavadra, Birmingham Education Partnership
- James Pestrige, The Pump
- Hash Lorgat, St Paul's Crossover
- Susan Barter, St Paul's Crossover
- Ray Walker, BEST Network
- Susannah Goh, Birmingham City University
- Patricia Rowe, Job Centre Plus
- Paul Phillips, Job Centre Plus
- Mark Whitehouse, JOB Centre Plus