

Councils supporting youth transitions into work and learning

Case studies



Foreword



Councillor David Simmonds

Chairman, LGA Children and Young People Board

We face a huge challenge in creating quality work and learning opportunities for all our young people, and equipping them with the skills and experiences to realise their potential.

The recession has hit young people hardest, and we cannot rely on economic growth to create the opportunities to resolve this structural challenge within job markets – without service reform, we project one in three young people will still be unemployed or underemployed by 2018.

Councils are ambitious for young people and have statutory responsibilities to support their transition, such as to ‘secure suitable education and training for all young people aged 16 to 19’ and to ‘encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training’, reducing disengagement.

I am proud to say local government is succeeding. The proportions of 16 to 18 year olds participating is at an all time high. But despite this success councils identify barriers that limit what spending can achieve for young people. For instance nationally funded services remain fragmented over 30 different services and schemes and struggle to respond to local jobs markets - a locally coherent and responsive offer would be far better placed to tackle the challenging rise in disengagement among 19 to 24 year olds.

Local government is uniquely placed to bring partners together and lead initiatives to help prevent youth unemployment, tackling the multitude of barriers that help cause it. Councils know this, and are seeking to improve the local relevance of skills that all young people achieve, coordinating and

targeting interventions to engage the more vulnerable young people, and supporting them to find work.

The activity captured in this report only just begins to demonstrate the breadth of work councils are undertaking with their partners. They include some remarkable successes and innovations, which could be loosely grouped into a number of themes:

Preparing for transition – councils and schools are best placed to identify young people at risk of falling through the gaps, and work together to intervene early, providing the support to ensure positive transitions.

For instance Barnsley has developed a traffic lights model to identify pupils at risk, Norfolk provided one-to-one support for 250 pupils at risk of not transitioning successfully into post-16 learning, and Wandsworth runs a ‘clearing house’ service over the summer to find post-16 options for young people without a place.

Personal advisers – councils have found services are most successful in reengaging young people when consistent and personalised through single relationships, often remodelling services through personal advisers or key workers.

For instance Dudley provides an adviser in each school to provide person-centred support drawing on a range of multi-agency services, Hounslow brings together a range of services through personal advisers providing a single relationship, and Bradford funds key workers in areas with high disengagement to build trust with young people and coach their participation in local reengagement programmes.

Planning provision across places – councils have sought to understand and plan post-16 provision across their local areas, trying to ensure sufficient high quality opportunities for young people that lead to work.

For instance Derbyshire has reviewed the supply and demand of post-16 options across the county leading to improved planning with providers, Leeds coordinates a comprehensive set of post-16 learning options across the city providing an online resource to promote and process post-16 applications, and Surrey supports skills centres to fill a gap in post-16 provision supporting young people towards full participation by focusing on employment.

Developing and advising on vocational routes – many councils have sought to increase vocational options, particularly apprenticeships, and improve the careers advice offer to ensure young people are aware of options.

For instance Lincolnshire has apprenticeship champions to find and support opportunities, Warrington calls on employers to create apprenticeship opportunities through the planning process, Rochdale brokers relationships between partners and runs a careers advice programme for pupils, parents, teachers and others, and Leeds has helped young people scrutinise and improve careers advice across the city.

Brokering employer leadership and support into work – councils are seeking to build long-term relationships with employers, giving them genuine influence in the education and skills system, and the support to create learning and job opportunities locally.

For instance Nottingham runs an employer hub to capture vacancies and support unemployed residents to take positions and runs a subsidised jobs programme to help vulnerable young people, Suffolk has created a Youth Jobcentre bringing together and revitalising employment for young people around employer need, and Oldham has a youth guarantee working with employers to create opportunities for all 18 to 24 year olds.

Looking ahead

There is a lot of really excellent and very innovative work going on. This is exciting and cause for optimism, but, in many ways it is also concerning because much of it aims to redress the limitations and barriers that fragmented national services create in localities, rather than building on the success and responsiveness of education, skills and employment services in places.

This is not a sustainable way to deliver public services long term. Particularly as councils continue to respond to 40 per cent reductions in youth service budgets between 2010 and 2015, and as their capacity to influence and improve outcomes is weakened by a service landscape that is only becoming increasingly centralised, fragmented and autonomous.

Local government is the most trusted and most efficient part of the public sector, it has an active youth voice and is finding innovative approaches to reduce and integrate spending in ways that keep valuable services running. But our concern is that innovation will only go so far, and I am keen that we collectively consider how the total public investment can coherently deliver more with less.

So we want to take a step back and look at the totality of services supporting young people's transition from school to work, what it looks like in the places that young people live and learn, and how best to enable the unique role, democratic accountability, and ingenuity within councils.

Building on the experiences of councils and findings from the Whole Place Community Budgets, City Deals, and independent reviews – including the Heseltine Review and the Youth Unemployment Commission chaired by David Miliband – we believe there are **three principles that must underpin reform:**

1. **Personal advisers for vulnerable groups** – young people disengaged or at risk of disengaging benefit most from single straightforward and consistent personal relationships through which to access advice and wider support into learning or work, which could include everything from health to justice services, and could be targeted in areas with higher youth disengagement.
2. **Coherent and responsive post-16 pathways across places** – young people not going to university are likely to remain in their local economy and rely on a clear set of post-16 learning pathways into local jobs – including college, apprenticeships and other learning - and high quality independent advice to help them make the right choices.
3. **Genuine and simplified employer leadership within all services** – employers of all sizes need a straightforward relationship with the totality of education, skills and employment services which can respond to the diverse mix of local employer demands and can support them to offer opportunities for all young people, including the most vulnerable.

We want Government to enable local partners to get on and develop quality services built around the needs of young people and employers rather than institutions, sharing accountabilities and collectively working towards better outcomes and public savings.

The examples in this report offer a small glimpse at the kinds of innovations and activity that would emerge if councils and partners were freed to determine services locally – there is enormous potential to tap into.

Councillor David Simmonds

Chair of Local Government Association
Children and Young People's board'

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Preparing for transition and supporting engagement

Surrey County Council – supporting transition and reengagement focused around employment

Surrey strives to go beyond a system that supports young people into participation to one that creates individually tailored opportunities for every young person. Historically, Surrey has had between 800 and 1,000 young people who are not participating in education, training or employment (NEET); in March 2014 there were just 464 disengaged young people. Surrey aims to reduce this to zero in 2015, to be delivered through a range of measures.

Transition Programme

Surrey has established a Year 11/12 'Transition Programme' to provide additional support to young people in Year 11 who have been identified as most at risk of disengaging. This service provides young people with additional, tailored mentoring support during their last two terms of Year 11 and the first term of Year 12, or first three months of employment. During 2012/13, this support was provided to over 1,500 young people, with 90 per cent making a successful transition to full participation.

Ready For Work Re-engagement Programme

Around 40 per cent of disengaged young people have been so for over six months. In response Surrey's Youth Support Service developed 'Ready 4 Work' (R4W), a re-engagement programme that includes training built around employability and a curriculum relevant to the needs of local employers. Youth Support Service teams design and deliver the programme alongside young people, which is different in each borough and seeks to engage the hardest to reach in groups or on a one-to-one basis, depending on individuals need. There are currently over 360 young people on the R4W programme.

Many of the young people the council work with express a strong desire to work rather than participate in education and training. However, they tend to lack the skills and experience needed to access employment. Under the Leader's 'Ready for Work' project, Surrey has recruited Employment Development Officers to provide specialist support for young people, assist with completing job applications and interview preparation, source paid and unpaid work placements, and identify apprenticeships which meet their interests.

Building on the existing success of council's supported employment service for vulnerable adults, 'EmployAbility', the 'Ready for Work' project also offers specialist disability support and job coaching to disengaged young people who have special educational needs and disabilities.

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Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council – support for all, focusing on the vulnerable

Dudley Council is working to reduce youth unemployment and raise achievement, and is leading efforts with schools and partners to support young people at risk of disengaging. At the end of 2013, about 650 16 to 18 year olds in the borough were disengaged, just under six per cent of the cohort.

The council runs an in-house Connexions service supporting 13 to 19 year olds, parents, carers and professionals. It includes two core elements: free support for vulnerable young people and a traded careers service for schools.

Early intervention with at-risk pupils

Dudley schools use a risk of disengagement (RoNI) indicator to identify, from the age of 14, those most at risk of disengaging. Each school has a linked personal adviser, who works across a number of schools with an agreed list of pupils offering intensive person-centred support. There is a dedicated personal adviser for looked after children and specialist support for young offenders. All advisers can access the multi-agency support necessary to help each young person.

Advisers communicate with the young people through live chat, face-to-face in school or in their homes (for those absent from school). They also engage with parents and carers early on, as it has been shown that this can help influence a positive outcome. This intensive support has successfully increased the number of young people in post-16 provision. By January 2014 Dudley's participation rate was 94 per cent at Year 12 and about 86 per cent at Year 13.

Education and business partnership

The council is strengthening links between employers and schools, where until now there has been a significant gap. This includes supporting the Education and Business Partnership (EBP), which undertakes careers work with schools such as running careers days, industry days, workshops and talks by employers. This is part of the council's traded service.

All schools have access to this partnership, which they mainly use for work experience. Dudley's EBP works closely with the Black Country EBP and the two often make joint bids, which can result in opportunities for free work-related activities in schools, such as the Black Country Skills Factory, which is harnessing support from employers to address key skills gaps.

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Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council – raising aspirations through reengagement

Five per cent of 16 to 19 year olds in Barnsley are disengaged, but a worryingly high number of pupils do not get at least five good GCSEs or equivalent (from 35 to 64 per cent across 12 secondary schools).

Reducing disengagement

Barnsley Borough Council and its partners are turning this around through targeted work to raise aspirations and attainment. The council uses a 'traffic light' profile tool to identify 14 to 16 year olds at risk of dropping out at 16. The borough's small geographical area and strong partnerships enable quick information sharing and swift action to prevent young people from dropping out. Those identified as at risk are given a named mentor who talks to them about their situation and can arrange support such as extra tutoring.

The council runs a targeted information, advice and guidance service for vulnerable 14 to 16 year olds and disengaged 16 to 19 year olds. Support is provided through multi-agency initiatives such as youth hubs and troubled families school panels. By bringing the advice service in-house the council was able to re-design it to respond quickly to changes in circumstances, and integrate it with other provision. For example, the council has a subcontract to deliver the Youth Contract, which has been aligned with the advice service.

Raising aspirations

Barnsley's 'I Know I Can' programme helps 13 to 24 year olds to build confidence, raise aspiration and qualification levels and strengthen life skills. The website brings together information on local courses, careers, apprenticeships and training along with advice on health, housing, growing up, staying safe and other relevant issues. Linked events with the 'I Know I Can' branding include an employability challenge bringing schools and businesses together to develop employability skills, with activities ranging from industry open days and master classes to mock interviews and competitions.

Barnsley Council funds and organises 'Ambition Barnsley', a careers fair for 14 to 16 year olds which highlights the range of vocational pathways. In 2013 more than 600 young people attended the fair with their schools during the day, and a further 1,000 young people, parents and carers came in the evening. The council is also building up an alumni network for each school which brings former pupils back to talk to current pupils about their experiences since leaving school.

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Leeds City Council – enabling young people to scrutinise provision and lead services

Leeds City Council has brought the whole city together around its ambition that all young people should make a successful transition to education, employment or training. As a result, services including schools, colleges, health, the police and the voluntary sector now have a much greater collective ownership around supporting young people to make a successful post-16 transition.

Youth scrutiny over careers advice

The council has been supporting young people to scrutinise and improve the information, advice and guidance offered by Connexions, schools and colleges. The aim is to ensure everyone has access to age-appropriate, high-quality impartial information and advice, and that young people have a role in determining the services they should receive.

The youth council led a project to determine what young people wanted their careers service to offer, and how and when they would like to receive information. They developed a calendar showing what information they would like and when, and presented this to local schools and colleges. With input from the young people, the council has developed a self-assessment toolkit that schools are using to review the information, advice and guidance they provide and ensure it meets young people's needs.

Supporting transition

Leeds City Council has helped to coordinate and promote a comprehensive set of post-16 learning options for young people in the city. It developed an online resource providing access to information on college and school options, apprenticeship pathways, vacancies and key local job sectors. Most colleges now use this to promote their courses and process post-16 applications.

The council has identified groups of particularly vulnerable under-16s and is putting extra resources into preventative work to support their transition into a positive post-16 destination. This intensive support is provided to more than 900 students (from a cohort of 7,500) and joins up with wider post-16 support from Connexions, with the aim of significantly increasing post-16 participation.

Devolved Youth Contract

The devolved Youth Contract, part of the Leeds City Deal, has been central to re-engaging 16 to 17 year olds. The council has been able to commission provision alongside existing information and advice services to ensure they work well together, avoiding duplication or individuals 'falling between the cracks'. Joining up resources and services can be tricky, but Leeds has found it important in ensuring that support is consistent, personalised and successful.

Of 772 young people on the Youth Contract since September 2012, 539 (70 per cent) had progressed into positive destinations by February 2014. Young people yet to make this transition will continue to receive personalised support until they achieve it.

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Norfolk County Council – supporting schools to help young people at risk of disengaging at 16

Guidance advisers

The project used the existing resource of the county council's guidance advisers, who usually only work with a small group of very vulnerable pre-16s. They provided transitional support to 248 Year 11 leavers identified by schools as not having an offer of a place in college or not being likely to achieve the grades needed. Having them identified by schools meant the initiative picked up young people who technically had an offer but were unlikely to take it up, who otherwise would not have been on the council's radar until September.

The advisers made contact with every one of them, usually on the phone but sometimes face-to-face, in the two weeks after the results in August. They talked about their plans, offered guidance and signposted them to college open days, training opportunities, vacancies and a council-run clearing event. About 15 per cent of the group had an offer they intended to take up, but the rest were undecided.

Promoting opportunities

The clearing event, 'Opportunities Norfolk', had a focus on jobs and apprenticeships. There was a jobs board with 160 current vacancies along with representatives from all local providers. As well as the target group, the council invited all disengaged young people aged 16 to 19, 16 to 17 year olds in work without training and 16 to 24 year olds interested in apprenticeships. About 160 young people attended. When they arrived they were met by the transition support advisers who talked to them then linked them up with appropriate providers.

Of the target group, 74 per cent went on to education, employment or training. The feedback was that this transition support had been helpful to them. Surprisingly, 53 per cent of them went into full-time education, 11 per cent into apprenticeships or other employment, and 11 per cent into full-time training. This evidence suggests that the summer transitional support was worth doing, and Norfolk County Council is now looking to mainstream this activity.

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London Borough of Wandsworth – early interventions and supporting transitions

Wandsworth is the largest inner London Borough and has a very successful secondary school sector, with 94 per cent of schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. The number of disengaged young people has been just under five per cent over the last five years, and Wandsworth Council has been chipping away at this number. In 2009, 55 Year 11 leavers were disengaged. By 2013, just 30 were disengaged and the whereabouts of three others was unknown.

Early identification and support

The council's 14 to 19 service has been working closely with Wandsworth schools on early identification of 'at risk' learners, to help them towards a positive post-16 transition. This work focuses on the 10 or 20 most vulnerable young people in each year group at each school, providing intensive support from the age of 15.

The 14 to 19 team appointed a learning broker to focus on this activity, visiting schools and providing personalised support to at-risk pupils. The team is looking at how to manage the process differently through working more strategically with schools and youth support service colleagues

Wandsworth's work around the September Guarantee process and risk of disengagement indicators (RoNI) underpins this work, though in practice the knowledge of school staff is critical in identifying those most at need. The council is working to identify 16 to 17 year olds without a post-transition place for September by the end of March, by combining data from the schools census and the September Guarantee return. Appropriate support will be put in place through the 14 to 19 service and personal advisers from the integrated youth support service.

Clearing house event

Wandsworth Council also runs 'clearing house' events. From 2014, instead of inviting pupils to an event, a team of staff will undertake a mass telephone and email exercise contacting all young people without a place, talking through their options and signposting them to opportunities. The council has also worked with young people in post-16 settings to create a DVD for use in schools, sharing their experience to inspire others.

By January 2014, the number of disengaged 17 to 19 year olds had fallen to 176 (3.5 per cent of the total cohort). Some were thought to be at university but UCAS no longer shares information with local authorities, so this information is being sought directly from schools instead.

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Bradford Metropolitan District Council – personal advisers and locally tailored reengagement programmes

Bradford is part of the Leeds City Region and is successfully using its devolved Youth Contract to help at-risk 16 to 17 year olds access and sustain employment, education and training. In January 2014, Bradford achieved a historic low in terms of disengaged young people when the three-month average fell to 5.4 per cent (down from 7.8 per cent in three years). The number of 'unknowns' fell from 4.7 per cent in January 2013 to 2.9 per cent in January 2014.

Two local initiatives are behind this success. The council's key worker service and its Young Futures Fund are providing intensive support to more than 800 young people over three years, helping them to progress into a positive destination and stay there for at least six months. Since 2012, Bradford's Youth Contract has had a 74 per cent success rate in terms of progressions achieved against the number of starts.

Intensive key worker support

Bradford Council commissions two providers to deliver an intensive, personalised key worker support service. It focuses on the district's 10 'NEET hotspots', areas where young people are most at risk; and on a range of vulnerable groups such as young parents, those in insecure housing, young offenders and leavers from the pupil referral unit.

The council funds key workers to build trusting, stable relationships to help these young people break down barriers to participation. Each has a personal progression plan which details how the two will work together to find and secure opportunities. Key worker support is provided for up to six months after a positive destination is achieved. The providers work towards six key outcomes and are rewarded through a payment by results arrangement.

Specialist voluntary sector support

Bradford Council has used its opportunity to commission the Youth Contract to deliver the 'Young Futures Fund', which harnesses the strength of local voluntary and community organisations to achieve better outcomes for young people. It provides six grants of £10,000 each year to work with and engage specific target groups of 16 to 17 year olds.

Bradford has a strong community and voluntary sector and the council was keen to empower it and harness its expertise. The programme is managed on its behalf by Young Lives Bradford, a network of organisations delivering services to children and young people. Among the current projects are the 'African Caribbean Achievement Project', matching young people with supported work placements; an environmental social enterprise run by Bradford YMCA; and a project engaging young people through creative activities.

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Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council – promoting pathways to young people and those around them

Supporting schools to promote alternative pathways

Rochdale takes a hands-on approach to improving careers information, advice and guidance (IAG) in schools. Every school has an IAG action plan, following a self-assessment developed with the council or its commissioned IAG provider. If too many young people are disengaging, the school and local authority work together to identify what action needs to be taken.

The council acts as a central point of contact between schools and work-based training providers across the area. If schools want information or are running an event, the council links them with appropriate providers – for example, someone to talk about apprenticeships or host a visit by pupils, staff or governors.

This ensures schools get the most appropriate information rather than relying on providers they know about or those that 'shout loudest'. Schools were being bombarded with information, with dozens of providers offering to do events. The council's brokerage role simplifies the process, reduces the amount of time schools spend talking to providers and ensures that pupils get the right information.

Support for parents, teachers and governors

Surveys have shown that local pupils get most careers advice from their parents, peers and teachers, so Rochdale Council has developed a programme to empower teachers, parents, school governors and young people with the information they need to make or promote informed choices.

There is a focus on promoting all pathways equally. The council runs events for teachers about the local economy and employment pathways and is working to extend this to school governors to empower them to examine and question the careers IAG offered at their schools. Council staff deliver one-hour evening pathway information sessions to parents, carers and teachers of pupils in Years 10 and 11, with a clear and impartial focus on all progression pathways and local opportunities, rather than on individual institutions.

The council has developed a brochure highlighting nine of the major work-based training providers used by local young people. It explains what apprenticeships are, the routes to access them and what is available locally. Around 4,000 copies a year are sent to schools, parents' evenings and careers events. It also produces a 14 to 16 collaborative provisions brochure and a pathways and provisions leaflet for parents, teachers and partners.

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Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea – mutualising youth support for 13 to 25 year olds

Epic CIC is the first public service youth mutual to spin out of local government. They deliver a range of youth support services to children and young people up to the age of 19, and up to 25 where an individual has a lifelong learning difficulty and/or disability.

Responding to funding challenges

In 2012, Epic's employees vote unanimously in favour of spinning out as a public service mutual, with support from the council and the Cabinet Office's Mutuals Support Programme.

Innovation, diversification and re-investment

Moving to a public service mutual model helps Epic put frontline staff and young people at the heart of its decision-making, with Epic's board including five elected employees as well as two young people. The mutual model has also enabled Epic's staff to identify and implement enterprising ideas for working with young people, which will be sustainable over the long term.

For example, one of Epic's youth centres is funded by a local independent school to develop an environmental project for young people at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. Another youth centre has developed an independent school catering for young people at risk of exclusion, funded by schools purchasing places.

The service is able to diversify its offer, and has won a contract with the local Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for youth workers to deliver healthy lifestyles programmes to hard to reach young people, that might not otherwise access NHS services. And their kayaking centre on the River Thames now sells kayaking trips to the general public with profits reinvested back into Epic's core youth services.

Together, initiatives like this are helping Epic pass on significant savings to the council - more than £800,000 over the next 5 years - whilst at the same time investing in and expanding its youth support service. These savings are in addition to the £765,000 of cashable savings delivered to the council in the last two years.

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London Borough of Hounslow – personal advisers supporting reengagement

Hounslow Council has been working with schools to identify and support young people at risk of disengaging. The council led on a project to develop the risk of disengagement indicator (RoNI), providing a systematic way of identifying young people at real risk of dropping out. Hounslow asks each of the 12 participating secondary schools to identify 15 to 20 individuals most at risk of disengaging from age 14 onwards.

Intensive personal advisers

Schools sign up to a partnership agreement outlining what the borough's Connexions service can provide for these pupils and what the school itself needs to do. Each school (or alternative education provider) is linked to an intensive personal adviser from Connexions, and they visit the schools to work intensively with young people identified as at-risk in Year 11.

The level of support depends on the individual and can include drawing up action plans, help with course applications and CVs, interview preparation, managing the application process and accompanying students on visits to providers.

Sequencing support for consistency

Hounslow Council is also involved in linking local provision with a European Social Fund (ESF) initiative aiming to prevent young people from dropping out. This support is being offered to pupils in Year 10 identified as at risk, with two external providers delivering the service.

The council has brought all the provision together to offer a consistent service for young people. At-risk pupils are identified in Year 9 through the RoNI and schools begin preventative work with them, for example through learning mentors; in Year 10 they will receive support through the ESF project; they then move into the care of the council's intensive personal adviser, which runs throughout Year 11.

This intensive support for those most at risk of dropping out will ensure that they are prepared for their options from the age of 16. By Year 11 up to 330 young people will be eligible for this extra support, equating to 10 to 12 per cent of the cohort.

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Suffolk County Council – reengagement through employability

Suffolk County Council is piloting school work clubs in secondary schools, targeting 15 to 16 year olds at the highest risk of disengaging with support to help them make a successful post-16 transition.

A job club model

The initiative takes the idea of a job club and runs it in a school context. The council employs four work club leaders, based in schools, who build relationships with young people identified as at risk of disengaging. Support is provided throughout the critical final year and into the summer holidays following their GCSEs.

This one-to-one support can include going through the young person's post-16 options with them, helping them to find out about apprenticeships and courses, writing CVs and visits to employers. These young people can feel very worried about applying for and holding down a job. The work club leaders help to raise their aspirations, encourage them to see what is possible and help them make better-informed decisions about their future.

Sticking with their choices

About 90 per cent of the young people receiving this support go on to education, employment or training, despite them being the group at most risk of disengaging. The council has been looking at how sustainable the support is in terms of whether the young people stick with their choice. Six months on, 85 per cent remain engaged with their course, job or training; and 18 months on, 80 per cent remain engaged. Sustained participation is critical for the young person's future and for the future cost to public services.

Key to the success of this initiative is the ability for the work club leader and young person to build an ongoing, stable relationship of trust and informed advice. Half of the young people involved have special educational needs and one-third are on free school meals. The council is now looking to build on this success and deliver the support in its pupil referral units.

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Planning post-16 provision and vocational pathways to work

Derbyshire County Council – planning responsive provision across an area

Derbyshire is divided into six learning provider networks, known as learning communities. Derbyshire County Council's services for teenagers team has been working with them to evaluate post-16 provision across the county, as part of its work around raising young people's aspirations and achievement.

In February 2014, the percentage of disengaged 16 to 18 year olds ranged from 3.7 to 5.8 per cent across the county. Young people can choose from about 70 post-16 providers in Derbyshire and many others outside the county.

Understanding the post-16 offer

The post-16 review was designed to explore whether capacity matched demand, and whether there was enough breadth of provision to meet young people's needs and aspirations and local labour market demands. It looked at quality of provision; diversity of choice in terms of provider, curriculum offer and progression routes; and how new provision – such as university technical colleges (UTCs) and studio schools – would impact on established providers.

The council examined data on capacity, current and future cohort sizes, provision and gaps, levels of disengagement, learner mobility, skills priority areas, apprenticeship take-up, GCSE performance and much more. Following the review, it sent a detailed report and tailored data pack to stakeholders in each learning community.

Shaping and improving provision

The review identified many issues for potential action. For example, many young people were not being placed on post-16 courses at the right level. A significant number who had achieved Level 2 qualifications at the age of 16 were being placed on Level 1 courses, which could demotivate them and lead to disengagement. As a result, the council is working with the county training provider network to understand why this happens, review the initial post-16 diagnostic testing of young people and develop accelerated in-year learning pathways.

Another key finding related to skills gaps. For example, Burton, which borders with south Derbyshire, is a national hub for logistics, but there was little or no post-16 provision relating to logistics in the area. The council, stakeholders and a logistics training provider are now exploring how to introduce provision. In the areas affected by planned UTCs and studio schools, local learning communities are working closely with the new providers to ensure young people get the right information on what they can offer.

The team has compiled a number of actions for implementation, some county-wide, others area-specific. The six learning communities have warmly welcomed the review, and the council now intends to conduct a full post-16 review every three years.

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Surrey County Council – creating skills offer for all young people

Surrey has identified gaps in provision across the county and developed solutions to ensure that all young people, and especially the more vulnerable, are able to benefit from post 16 opportunities in colleges and training providers or apprenticeships that take into personal circumstances and reduce the risk of them disengaging.

Surrey Skills Centres

An estimated 20 per cent of disengaged young people need flexible provision to support their journey towards full participation. The council identified this gap in provision and so funded Skills Centres to offer tailored support in familiar, non-threatening settings. The training is delivered by local providers from local youth centres and is tailored to the diverse needs across eleven boroughs. Young people moving onto this provision are supported to participate by individual advisers in a case-management model.

The training offered in Skills Centres varies from area to area and may include vocational provision in practical disciplines such as bricklaying, catering or horticulture. By taking learning out into local communities Skills Centres are able to engage young people who have had negative experiences within structured learning and challenge their perceptions of learning. Young people are given opportunities to gain short, work-focused qualifications which may represent passports to employment in some industries, such as hospitality. All of the training delivers key employability skills and is complemented by the offer of meaningful work placements for participants.

Skills Centres offered 200 new learner places within its first phase, funded by the council under a pump-priming model, the national Education Funding Agency is now funding these places. Within the first year of delivery 38 per cent of learners participating in Skills Centres sustained progression for a minimum of three months to apprenticeships, employment and further education. Many other young people remained in Skills Centres to further enhance their skills.

Apprenticeships

Bucking the national trend, Surrey has seen an increase in the number of young people aged 16 to 18 entering apprenticeships within 2013/14, a target of 500 new apprentices in 2013/14 was set and achieved three months early. A £750 grant towards the recruitment and induction costs of hiring an apprentice has been offered to all employers taking on a young person.

This is facilitated through close partnership working with the Association of Learning Providers Surrey which administers this grant on behalf of the council and works in partnership with the colleges and training providers across the county. Partnership with the Federation of Small Businesses was also essential in helping raise awareness and recruit employers through events and networking.

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Lincolnshire County Council – supporting apprenticeships for the more vulnerable

Work around improving opportunities for young people is a priority at Lincolnshire County Council. There is a strong focus on reducing unemployment among under-25s, which is around 30 per cent. The number of disengaged 16 to 18 year olds fell from 4.9 per cent in 2010 to 3.8 per cent in 2012.

Apprenticeship champions

The council employs two apprenticeship champions, managed on its behalf by a local training provider network. They are building relationships with local employers in key sectors, providing a gateway to advice and support on taking on apprentices. They also work with schools to promote opportunities and alternative post-16 pathways to pupils.

The champions began work in 2011-12. Since then, 66 additional employers have taken on apprentices and 365 employers have attended engagement events. In the first year, the number of 16 to 18 year olds starting apprenticeships rose 14.4 per cent against a national drop of 2.1 per cent. Despite difficult economic conditions, those starting apprenticeships in 2012-13 rose a further 5.1 per cent, against a national drop of 11.6 per cent.

To support this work, Lincolnshire is developing intelligence on local skills shortages and growth areas and will share this with all learning providers to ensure pupils get the right information. One aim is to highlight skills shortages such as food engineering. The council is developing information packages for parents and pupils moving into secondary schools, which will outline the opportunities available and the pathways towards them.

Support for vulnerable learners

Lincolnshire Council also runs a multi-agency Vulnerable Learners Group, under the leadership of the 14 to 19 partnership, which brings partners together to identify the barriers preventing target groups from accessing post-16 learning. For example, there was some confusion as to whether post-16 learning providers could refer students to the child and adolescent mental health teams. As a result, clear information and advice has been sent to all post-16 providers and the mental health resource has been increased to deal with more referrals.

A specific post-16 strategy for young people with learning difficulties or a disability has been developed to create and improve opportunities. This is resulting in some innovative collaborative arrangements, such as 'Growing Futures', where a group of providers have formed a charitable trust to maintain and develop facilities based on an old special school site, including post-16 education and a café and shop providing work experience and supported internships.

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London Borough of Redbridge – supporting the most vulnerable into quality learning opportunities

Redbridge Council is improving employment opportunities for young people with a learning difficulty and/or physical disability, joining up provision and identifying service gaps. It is working with schools, colleges, other councils and the voluntary sector to champion a diverse, alternative post-14 curriculum that prepares young people for training, work and independence.

Advocating on behalf of young people

The council has been working with its parent partnership service, Interface, which provides advice and advocacy for families where a young person has a learning difficulty and/or physical disability. Together they developed a business case looking at where the current models of support into employment were not working, and at what was needed to put it right.

This has resulted in a number of initiatives. Interface is actively advocating on behalf of young people and championing new approaches, for example discussing with Jobcentre Plus staff how they can improve front-line work through the disability employment advisers. It has met with local employers to talk about the nature of learning difficulties and learning disabilities, helping them to make 'reasonable adjustments' around the specific needs of individuals.

Another initiative provides intensive support for 20 young people to help them access employment, internships, work experience and apprenticeships. Under the council's leadership, voluntary sector organisations are supporting them to develop new skills and access job coaching and accredited employability courses.

A smoother transition to employment

Redbridge Council and the Foundation for Learning Disabilities are looking at what the families of children with complex needs require in terms of support, using person-centred planning approaches to raise aspiration around employment. The foundation's research has shown that if person-centred planning starts early enough, then the transition to employment can be smoother.

The council is bringing together everyone who contributes to employment, volunteering and work experience for young people with special needs through a new Disability Employment Network. This will help ensure the right provision is in place, inform young people about employment pathways and work collaboratively with local businesses.

Redbridge is working with other councils to develop a sub-regional local offer that prepares young people for the transition to adulthood through an expanded vocational curriculum, providing more chance of gaining the skills and confidence necessary to secure employment. An outcome-based commissioning model will underpin this work in partnership with local and sub-regional further education colleges.

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Warrington Borough Council – creating apprenticeships and empowering employers

Warrington Borough Council is engaging and supporting employers to play a proactive and influential role across local education and skills provision, and, through the planning process, is working closely with new developments to ensure a proportion of new vacancies are taken by local unemployed residents, and particularly young people.

Requirements through the planning process

The council is keen to ensure major new developments, such as the Omega strategic employment site - benefit young people and attaches a condition setting out jobs and skills requirements on new planning applications, as well as making sure local businesses are involved in subcontracting and supply chain opportunities.

Aims include trying to ensure that: new vacancies on site should be offered as job and apprenticeship opportunities for local people; that such opportunities should be made available for unemployed people particularly disengaged young people; that work experience placements should be offered for pupils, students and unemployed young people; and that local schools should be invited for site visits or presentations should be given at local schools to promote career opportunities.

In return the council offers a coherent set of support for employers, acting as the conduit between developers, contractors and incoming employers, and local stakeholders such as colleges, Jobcentre Plus and Work Programme providers, to ensure residents have the skills that employers need.

Brokering employer leadership over skills

Last year the council launched the Warrington Skills Commission which will give employers the platform and opportunity to influence the shape of local skills provision to ensure it addresses current and future skills need in key sectors.

This business-led forum provides: an effective voice for businesses in key local sectors; facilitates constant dialogue about future skills needs with all stakeholders; opportunity for a mix of businesses to define their current and ongoing needs; engages businesses in co-designing skills provision; and platform for skills and training providers to hear and plan a coherent response to the requirements set out by employers.

Leading by example, council apprenticeship programme

The council launched its new apprenticeship programme in 2013, with an emphasis on encouraging applications from children in care, care leavers and disengaged young people, who are recruited through partner services and agencies which are often able to provide preparatory pre-apprenticeship support. In total, 45 new apprentices have started work at the council last year, and 34 out of the new starters are between 16 and 24 years old.

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London Borough of Lewisham – tracking young people to improve outcomes

Lewisham has high levels of participation among 16 to 18 year olds, with a NEET figure of just 3.6 per cent in January 2014 (290 young people). Most continue in education or employment with training. As part of its work to prevent 18 to 19 year olds from disengaging, Lewisham Council has been working to track every 18-year-old in the borough through a dedicated tracking team.

Identifying and tracking young people

The destination of about 900 16-18 year olds was unknown at the start of 2014. The NEET tracking action plan uses ways such as data sharing with schools and Jobcentre Plus, mail outs, door-knocking, social media, events and online surveys to track them down. These young people may have moved home, finished a course, gone to university or are studying outside the borough, so it can be particularly difficult to track 18-year-olds.

When those who have become disengaged are identified, intensive one-to-one support is provided by the council's youth support service through a central drop-in centre, helping them to overcome barriers to learning or employment. One-to-one specialist workers assess their needs, develop tailored support plans and work with them for up to six months. Young people can also self-refer or be referred by a parent, carer or professional.

Tracking outcomes to improve provision

Lewisham has created a post-16 tracking tool which tracks the pathways of all 16 to 19 year olds in the borough. This information identifies the percentage going to school, college, training, jobs and university. It is being developed into pupil-level data to provide a way for the council to talk to schools around issues of concern, such as drop-out at age 17 and the need for more effective advice and guidance on post-16 options. Lewisham also runs a system of peer reviews, which monitors and supports the delivery of careers guidance in schools and colleges.

The council has introduced a post-16 intensive surgery each October, January and April, bringing together all local college and sixth form providers to look at the risk of potential drop-outs and identifying those in need of support. An action plan is identified for each young person and the colleges link them to key agencies.

Intensive support is provided for at-risk groups such as teenage mothers, young carers, young offenders, those with learning difficulties or disabilities and care leavers. Early intervention and engagement work happens through a range of stakeholders and the council links in Youth Contract mentors help these young people secure a post-16 place.

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Suffolk County Council – revitalising apprenticeship opportunities

Suffolk County Council has been concerned about the lack of provision of apprenticeships across the county, and in 2013 councillors made the decision to invest in apprenticeships to increase the number and take-up of quality vocational opportunities. The funding will run for three years and cover three main initiatives.

Reaching out to smaller employers

The first element in the local apprenticeship service is to engage and support local employers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), helping them to explore what an apprenticeship is, creating new opportunities and helping with the recruitment process. The perception that there is a lot of 'red tape' in the apprenticeship process is a real barrier to businesses and discourages them from taking part. In Suffolk, more than 90 per cent of businesses are SMEs, which have historically been unlikely to offer apprenticeships, so there is huge potential.

Suffolk Council's local apprenticeship service will help them to create new opportunities, working with smaller employers to 'sell' the idea to them and offering support and advice through the entire process. This will include helping employers to recruit the right person and to identify the training providers and qualifications that will work best for them and their apprentices. In total the council is aiming to create an additional 5,000 apprenticeships by 2019.

Promoting opportunities to young people

The council will also coordinate a marketing and publicity campaign across Suffolk. It is working with the National Apprenticeship Service and local partners to put together a marketing strategy promoting high-quality opportunities to young people, parents, employers, schools and other providers of information, advice and guidance.

The third element of Suffolk's work will promote opportunities to young people through schools. This work will be hosted by the council, building on its good relationships with the schools network. Officers will go into schools to promote opportunities and provide support to young people applying for apprenticeships, for example helping them with the online application form. Those who have applied unsuccessfully will get extra one-to-one support, for example help going through their CVs and signposting to other opportunities such as traineeships.

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Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council – boosting higher level apprenticeships

Rochdale Council is working to improve the take-up of apprenticeships by 16 to 24 year olds. At the moment, around four per cent of the borough's school leavers begin apprenticeships. The number of 16 to 18 year old starters declined during 2013, in line with the national picture, but the number of 19 to 24 year old starters grew above the national average.

Rochdale has seen a year-on-year decline in the number of young people disengaging. By December 2013, 4.7 per cent of 16-18 year olds had disengaged, or 376 young people, down from 6.5 per cent the previous year. The number of 18 to 24 year olds claiming Jobseekers' Allowance fell from 2,060 to 1,350 in the year to December 2013, suggesting that the council's efforts are having an impact.

Improving higher-level apprenticeship opportunities

Rochdale is working to ensure that young people leaving college or school know that apprenticeships are an option for them. It is part of the Greater Manchester combined authority, which has access to funding to develop higher-level opportunities and is working with training providers to develop a strong regional offer. The first step is to obtain buy-in from providers and employers and identify the future skills gaps and opportunities.

Rochdale has a strong training provider network. In the past, this focused on work-based training providers in the borough, but most young people access training outside of it. The council invited the nine top training providers, which account for 85 per cent of training delivered to Rochdale's young people, to join the network, which publishes a weekly list of vacancies on a website attracting 1,500 hits a month.

Apprenticeships pop-up shop

Rochdale Council, local training providers and IAG partners ran an apprenticeship live vacancies pop-up shop for three months in 2014. Each provider staffed it for one half-day session a week. The shop provided information on vacancies, advice and support for people filling in applications. Young people, parents and employers could drop in, Jobcentre Plus referred people to it and all Year 11 pupils were invited to attend. 650 young people were referred to vacancies in 3 months.

The council runs regular apprenticeship job fairs and brings training providers into job centres to talk about opportunities. Many of the 18 to 24 year olds using Jobcentre Plus say they don't get enough support to access apprenticeships, so the council is beginning to examine ways in which quality face-to-face advice could be provided.

The flagship event for IAG in Rochdale, Future First, takes place every October and is led by the local authority. Around 2,000 pupils are brought by coach to the event, which showcases the post-16 options available throughout Greater Manchester. Training providers, colleges and sixth forms, universities and guidance services all showcase their provision. The two-day event stays open in the evening, attracting more than 500 parents.

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Hertfordshire – holistic approach for the hardest-to-reach

Hertfordshire County Council works with partners around a single offer that delivers consistently low levels of disengagement. Even during recession the number of disengaged young people (aged 16-18) dropped from 1,368 in 2010 to 1,071 in 2013 (4 per cent) – with just 2.9 per cent recorded as ‘unknown’.

Holistic approach through single advisers

Hertfordshire has developed a coordinated infrastructure of provision, where services are routed through single advisers that sit within One Stop Shops and Centres in every town in the county – developed through its Youth Connexions service.

All provision is planned against a single five stage offer; first identifying, tracking and contacting young people, second assessing their needs, allocating a case worker for individual support, third agreement of personalised action plans that build on a mix of personal, educational and employability skills, fourth referring onto training or support for work, and fifth, support for sustained participation with continued support and review with case worker.

The model achieves high contact rates with the local disengaged youth population, ensuring and supporting accessibility to support and opportunities. The council has built traded links with schools, Further Education Colleges and work related learning providers - through the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Provider Network – employers through the Herts Chambers of Commerce and TCHC – a regional provider holding a range of national contracts - to collectively bring together and plan provision and identify progression routes and secure experiences and opportunities with local employers.

Relationships with partners enable the council to maintain its overview of post 16 education and training provision, and to take action to influence provision and fill gaps. The council service delivers a number of specific initiatives to create progression pathways for disengaged and vulnerable individuals. For instance it offers top-ups to employers taking on apprentices from vulnerable groups, supports young people into volunteering, and helps disabled young people access employment support. The model has been particularly effective in supporting the local delivery of the Youth Contract for 16 and 17 year olds, significantly reducing youth disengagement in Stevenage, previously a hotspot.

As a result overall numbers of disengaged young people has fallen, and the rate in the county’s most deprived areas has also declined from 9.0% in 2011 to 6.7% in 2014. However there are challenges in supporting care leavers and young offenders, and those with learning difficulties – despite many successfully continuing in education when they were 16. The council is seeking to adjust services in response, including planning earlier transition planning for looked after children, working with Job CentrePlus to provide targeted support into employment, and bringing together Adult Mental Health, Housing Associations and other services that play a key role in supporting care leavers into work once they become independent.

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Leeds City Council – advice and support for older young people

The success of the devolved Youth Contract in Leeds means that in 2014 the city council will introduce a similar package of intensive support for unemployed 18-24 year olds, working in partnership with Jobcentre Plus to support 800 vulnerable young people.

An apprenticeship hub

The council is also working to increase the number of apprenticeships and promote them to unemployed young people. The City Deal has enabled it to develop an Apprenticeship Hub, bringing together programmes and partner resources to improve the offer to businesses and young people. It has been working with Leeds City College to develop an apprenticeship training agency to support the creation of opportunities involving smaller employers.

Between August 2013 and January 2014, these initiatives had already engaged with 82 businesses and 2,897 young people and had brokered 64 apprenticeship starts. The hub is taking forward work with sector skills councils and employers in key sectors including creative arts and digital media, manufacturing, finance and legal services.

Practical support with applications

The current focus of activity is to increase young people's awareness of the range of apprenticeships and support them to successfully apply. In one year, Leeds has seen a 12.5 per cent increase in residents registering on the National Apprenticeship Service vacancy system and a 2.1 per cent increase in applications.

Hub activity has included events with young people and parents, improved business engagement through media and information campaigns and the development of new higher and advanced-level apprenticeship frameworks, in partnership with universities and colleges. The range of pre-apprenticeship training can be confusing for young people, which can impact on participation, so the council is bringing together the advice on options to help them make the right choices.

Opportunities at the city council

As an employer, Leeds City Council has supported young people to access entry-level jobs and existing staff to retrain for new roles through apprenticeships. Over the past four years, it has enabled 883 staff to undertake an apprenticeship to acquire new skills, of which 149 were aged 16 to 24.

Working with Leeds City College, the council is delivering Work@Leeds for 18 to 24 year olds, providing two weeks of employability skills training then a six-week work experience placement at the council. Participants are supported to explore and secure progression opportunities. So far, 63 young people have begun the programme and 16 have progressed into jobs.

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Gateshead – boosting apprenticeships by simplifying the offer to employers

The Gateshead Apprenticeship Plan commits to increasing the number of apprenticeship by 600 before 2014, and increasing the number of for 16-18 year olds in apprenticeships to 260. Gateshead Strategic Partnership is working across the council, with the National Apprenticeship Service, Connexions, and the Gateshead Collective - a network of eight work-based learning providers – to deliver.

Gateshead Apprenticeship Offer

As part of its work to support the Raising of the Participation Age local partners undertook a local needs analysis of the post-16 market, which highlighted that many young people were expressing dismay at the lack of Apprenticeship opportunities available to them.

In response local partners committed to the Gateshead Apprenticeship Offer, which was put in place to support new employers create new opportunities and to co-ordinate information and support available in the borough - providing a central resource making it easier for employers to take on an apprentice.

A wide-ranging and diverse marketing and promotional campaign was supported as part of the councils work to support the Raising of the Participation Age. Activities undertaken included:

- a high-profile promotional campaign on the Tyne and Wear Metro and buses operating from Gateshead
- mail shots from the Leader of the Council to over 1,000 businesses across Gateshead highlighting the benefits of Apprenticeships and the package of incentives available
- editorials in various business publications
- business breakfast and other networking events
- an intensive telemarketing campaign targeting approximately 5,000 Gateshead businesses
- follow up on hot leads identified by National Apprenticeship Service.

Leads from the promotional campaign were followed up by NAS staff and referred to appropriate training providers who support the employers in taking on an Apprentice.

The simplified offer has resulted in an exceptional rise in the numbers of new employers recruiting apprentices. In just 12 months 100 new employers have signed up to the Offer and 195 new apprentices have now started employment.

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London Borough of Hounslow – creating quality apprenticeships

Hounslow bid for funding from the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) for a project aiming to deliver 100 apprenticeships for 16 to 18 year olds. This six-month initiative involved the borough's 14 to 19 project manager working with a Connexions recruitment adviser, building relationships with local employers to create apprenticeships.

Engaging local businesses

The council engaged 970 local businesses, over 90 per cent of them small and medium sized enterprises. Many had not offered an apprenticeship before. From those relationships, 98 vacancies were created with 60 employers. Hounslow Council created 20 new apprenticeships. The team supported employers to develop an induction programme, write job descriptions and work out what skills were needed, and then matched this with local young people identified as at risk of disengaging.

NAS data was used to identify young people in the borough who had been unsuccessfully applying for apprenticeships. The second branch of the project was to invite them to drop-in sessions and clinics to learn about the vacancies. The team found it quite a challenge to ensure that there were enough young people to fill these new apprenticeships, which risked frustrating employers. They focused on those who were already disengaged, rather than those still in education, offering support to motivate and engage them.

Support and brokerage

Creating apprenticeship opportunities and finding young people is only half the challenge. There were some significant issues around the job readiness of young people (for example attendance, punctuality and attitude), so the council is working with West Thames College to develop a two-week employability course. Without this preparation and mentoring many would drop out of a placement quickly. It has also renewed efforts to contact young people and provide them with information and advice on vocational routes.

The team underestimated how much support employers would need: without it there is a danger that some would be left with no suitable applicants and may be dissuaded from taking part again. Certain sectors were more willing to create apprenticeships, such as hair and beauty, care and administration. Working with construction firms was not fruitful as they prefer applicants aged 18 or over. The council is continuing to build relationships with employers to create quality opportunities that benefit the local economy and young people themselves.

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Reading Borough Council – creating a locally responsive all age careers offer

While Reading is a relatively successful economic area, it has a history of high drop-out levels among 16 to 18 year olds, and youth unemployment tripled during the recession.

Signposting to support

In 2010 an economic assessment of the area identified key barriers to the town's economic growth. The skills system had become complex and fractured, with unhelpful boundaries at the age of 19. The skills agenda, employment agenda, Work Programme and various providers were not always working in synch. Reading Borough Council carried out research with young people about the quality of the service they were getting, who summarised it and it came out as 'very poor', to a large extent due to these complexities.

In response, the council was successful with a bid to O2's public innovation programme to develop a 'one-stop shop' smart phone app and social media tools. 'Elevate Me' provides information on jobs, work placements, apprenticeships and practical help with CV writing and interview skills, and young people were involved in its design. In developing the website the council was able to drive partnership working with key stakeholders, and it has been using the project as a driver for encouraging agencies to work more coherently together.

A one-stop

Reading is part of the Thames Valley Berkshire City Deal, which has a strong focus on skills. Around £2.4 million of Youth Contract under-spend is being matched with local funding to provide a single access point to employment and skills opportunities for 16 to 24 year olds. This 'elevate reading' will bring together Jobcentre Plus, careers advice and other support in an accessible central building.

The aim is to provide tailored support to 4,500 young people over three years, helping them into education, learning and employment, and to reduce youth unemployment by 50 per cent. The service will have a brokerage role to ensure that young people are better geared up for jobs that relate to local economic need. It will create 1,500 work experience placements, 300 additional apprenticeships and 800 new wage incentives for eligible businesses.

The project has agreement in principle and the team is now looking at potential locations for the centre. Alongside the physical joining-up of services there will be better virtual joining-up through 'Elevate Me', which will be rolled out to the other authorities in the city region. The hope is that after three years of funding, the hub project will become sustainable.

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Brokering employment opportunities for young people

Suffolk County Council – bringing together services to create an offer for every 16 to 24 year old

The 'Youth Guarantee' is a large-scale programme to tackle unemployment among 16 to 24 year olds which is running across the Ipswich area as part of its City Deal. It aims to provide the support young people need to help get into work or other provision.

Suffolk County Council will put in place a universal offer for all 16 to 24 year olds in the Ipswich area who are out of work, regardless of their age, qualifications or anything else. All the support will be offered in one place, a new young people's job centre, located in a separate location from Jobcentre Plus.

Specialist job centre for young people

This will be a motivational and inspiring space with caseworker support available, taking a fundamentally different approach to the wider Jobcentre Plus offer for adults. The initiative will glue together all the local provision on offer to young people in a friendly and accessible place. 18-24 Jobcentre Plus advisers will be relocated to the new centre along with key partners such as the Work Programme and Youth Contract providers, and support for young people with issues such as homelessness or drug and alcohol abuse.

The council will lead on a personalised approach to supporting vulnerable young people by commissioning a caseworker service to deliver support based on an individual's needs – as intensive or light touch as they require. The caseworker will be able to tap into a network of support offered by partner organisations to ensure young people do not fall through the gaps in provision. Incentives will be on offer to the caseworker support service provider if young people successfully take up a place, job or training.

Through this initiative the council is aiming to reduce youth unemployment in the Ipswich area by half, supporting at least 3,500 young people into employment and, of these, 2,200 into sustained work of six months or more.

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Nottingham City Council – creating new opportunities for young people

Nottingham has developed an effective pipeline into work for those furthest from the labour market. Young people are engaged by the council and local community partners, and referred onto the 'Nottingham Jobs Fund' (and other employer incentive schemes), and into jobs captured by its Employer Hub.

Nottingham Jobs Fund

The 'Nottingham Jobs Fund' (NJF) was established in November 2011 and has created 486 new jobs to date. It is funded by Nottingham City Council and pays 50 per cent of the minimum wage for 12 months for every unemployed resident taken on by an employer.

The council has built strong relationships and trust with local employers, engaging over 300 employers with 85 per cent being in the private sector. Strict local checks are made to ensure employers are not cashing in on a public subsidy and minimising deadweight. 60 per cent of all subsidised jobs are sustained permanently after the subsidy ends, this has been achieved by ensuring that the jobs are attractive and progression and training opportunities.

Over 25 per cent of the jobs created have been apprenticeships, raising the number of with a Level 2 qualification. Just under 50 per cent of the people getting into work have come from wards with high levels of unemployment and approximately 20 per cent are from BME communities.

The council is now working with Jobcentre Plus to combine the Nottingham Jobs Fund and the Youth Contract wage incentive. This approach would increase the number of jobs created through the NJF and also increase the number of wage incentive payments made, a key target for JCP. The council has allocated an additional £1 million for 2014/15 and by combining with the Youth Contract will create an additional 220 jobs, bringing the total to 630.

Nottingham Employer Hub

The 'Employer Hub' puts the employer at the centre of the recruitment and skills solution, while maximising employment and training opportunities from major developments for local people. It gives employers a single point of contact to match their recruitment needs, including a dedicated account manager and a one-stop shop approach to providing recruitment and training

Since its inception in April 2012 the 'Employer Hub' has placed 1,411 unemployed Nottingham residents into the vacancies it manages. 1,243 of these were private or voluntary sector roles, but mostly private sector, and 168 were public sector roles. The 'Employer Hub' does not create jobs but captures vacancies within the local labour market. To ensure local people benefit, from construction projects in the city, the council uses its role as a planning authority to obligate developers to use the 'Employer Hub' and notify it of all vacancies two weeks before advertising more widely. For longer term projects, the council plans, and in some cases funds pre-employment activity in line with projected recruitment need.

The council is able to provide a joined-up vacancy service which compliments pre-employment and skill development schemes, providing residents with access to real job opportunities that are often lacking in current nationally funded initiatives.

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Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council – working with employers to create opportunities

In the past decade, jobs in Oldham's traditional manufacturing sector have declined by 50 per cent, while sectors including financial and professional services, social care and retail have grown. 'Get Oldham Working' is a councillor-led initiative founded on a strong commitment from stakeholders including Jobcentre Plus, the Work Programme and local employers, strategically led by Oldham Council.

By November 2013, the borough's youth disengagement rate was at a historic low of 4.7 per cent. As a pilot area for Universal Credit, specific data on youth unemployment is no longer available, but it is thought to have fallen from over 2,250 to about 1,700 during 2013.

Get Oldham working

'Get Oldham Working' was set up by Oldham Council to support local people into sustainable jobs. Local employers are encouraged to contribute towards the target of creating 2,015 new employment opportunities, from jobs to meaningful work experience, by 2015. In the 10 months following its launch in May 2013, more than 500 opportunities were created, including 167 full-time jobs; 264 people had taken up one of those opportunities. Businesses taking part get benefits including access to advice and support, advertising for vacancies, draw-down funding and grants.

Every organisation that wins a council contract or partnership will commit to using local labour and local businesses and is encouraged to provide new jobs or apprenticeships. For example, Unity Partnership, which provides services for the council including ICT, highways and customer services, is investing £100,000 a year to increase the number of apprenticeships and jobs over four years.

Support for young unemployed people

As part of 'Get Oldham Working', the Oldham Youth Guarantee will offer every 18-year-old an employment or training opportunity by 2015 – a job, traineeship, apprenticeship, self-employment or meaningful work experience. The council has brought together local employers, job centres, colleges, schools and the voluntary sector to commit to this shared outcome.

Oldham runs its own system of paid council-based traineeships for unemployed 18-24 year olds, which include employability training and help with finding progression opportunities. It has created 83 traineeships since September 2013, and the aim is for a 60 per cent positive progression rate. The council is also promoting youth enterprise an enterprise trust, run by a charity on the council's behalf that was founded with a £1 million donation from a local businessman. As well as access to finance or loans, young people can get help with creating a business plan and long-term business mentoring.

A total of 474 young people have been supported by 'Get Oldham Working' so far – 61 via jobs, 44 in traineeships, 41 on apprenticeships, 118 work experience placements, 204 16 to 18 year olds on a volunteering scheme and six via the enterprise trust.

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London Borough of Wandsworth – linking economic development to jobs support

Wandsworth and Lambeth Councils are working in partnership to drive the Nine Elms Vauxhall regeneration project with developers, investors and other parties. This redevelopment of an under-used industrial area is currently the largest single regeneration scheme in Europe. Both councils are keen to ensure that as many of the opportunities as possible go to local people.

Job and training brokerage role

Over the next 25 years or so the development is expected to create an extra 20,000 jobs and 19,000 new homes. Both Wandsworth and Lambeth Councils are building relationships with land owners, developers and employers to provide a job and training brokerage role. Crucially, this includes ensuring that local services equip local residents, including young people, to take advantage of the education, job, training and apprenticeship opportunities that will come through the development. Each developer has agreed to target a range of job opportunities, apprenticeships, work placements and traineeships to local people.

Through an education links programme over the next five years, Wandsworth Council is aiming to arrange a work-related learning experience for up to 12,000 young people. This will be achieved through site visits, work experience and internship programmes, workshops and careers fairs. The council is also taking a long-term perspective through a programme of work in primary schools to ensure younger children are aware of, and inspired by, the opportunities around them.

Helping unemployed people into opportunities

Several major employers are due to set up or expand inside the borough as part of the regeneration. The council is also working to ensure that local unemployed people can make the most of the opportunities. The number of people claiming jobseekers' allowance has already fallen – by January 2014 Wandsworth had the second-lowest proportion of claimants in London at just 2.2 per cent.

The council has set up a 'work match' scheme to create a fast-track into jobs for local people, allowing unemployed Wandsworth residents to apply for many positions before others can. Support and training can be provided to help them secure a role, such as help with applications. The council also runs regular jobs fairs to link local residents with information on jobs and training opportunities.

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Bradford Metropolitan District Council – creating opportunities for young people

Bradford has a large jobs shortage, with the need for over 16,000 additional jobs to be created in order to match UK employment rates. Unlocking the potential to create jobs and wealth is at the very heart of the local growth and employment strategy.

In order to meet these priorities the council is investing £7.7 million into 'Get Bradford Working' (GBW), a service bringing together all local partners to create new jobs, apprenticeships, work experience placements, and qualifications. Since 2013 the scheme has created 400 new jobs and placed people in a further 525 existing posts, and creating hundreds more work placements and other opportunities.

Employers are at the heart of the model. The council and chamber of commerce has teamed up to create E3 Bradford, developing an enterprise curriculum for education providers across the city, and brokering employer engagement in schools and colleges, creating apprenticeships and other opportunities that raise young people's aspirations.

Get Bradford Working – the Employment Opportunities Fund

The EOF provides a bridge into work for eligible participants who are employed on a 12 month temporary contract. During this time, participants are employed to carry out real work tasks which have community benefit. Bradford runs the programme jointly with Incommunities, Bradford's largest registered social landlord, and Jobcentre Plus.

The target audience for the EOF is individuals on active benefits who are aged 18-24, over 50 and those who have a disability or work limiting health condition. Client referrals will come from Jobcentre Plus and Work Programme providers. Clients do not have to enter into full time work, but must work over 16 hours per week and sign off benefits.

In addition to providing paid employment for up to 12 months, the EOF provides mentoring, individualised personal development outcomes and work-based activities throughout. These activities support participants to gain qualifications and increase their employability and confidence to enable sustainable employment. Clients will also be expected to undertake jobsearch activity throughout their employment, preparing them to gain sustained employment outside of the scheme.

Success has been underpinned by the local partnership approach pooling funding and sharing outcomes, building on trust and helping services are driven by the needs of local young residents. Bradford has invested £4.5 million, £500,000 from Incommunities, £600,000 from Jobcentre Plus, and £200,000 from the local Work Programme provider.

The shared commitment has been able to lever in and sequence other service providers funded by different national agencies, for instance the local National Careers Service provider helps undertake assessments of new referrals to the EOF, and local colleges and training providers are involved in delivering training to support the personal development plans of those on the scheme.

Plymouth City Council – building trust and commitment with employers

Youth unemployment is falling in Plymouth but remains above the national average. Most pupils stay on at sixth form but there is a sharp rise in disengagement at age 19, and very few young people go into apprenticeships. Plymouth City Council's 'Plan for Jobs' is developing initiatives to reach more young people aged 19 and over.

A commitment from employers

The 1,000 Club aims to broker support from companies across the city, seeking their commitment to help young people through job creation, apprenticeships, internships, work placements and school work experience placements. More than 2,000 opportunities have already been created. Support is also offered to more vulnerable young people such as those with learning disabilities and long-term unemployed 18 to 24 year olds. The initiative is seeking to ensure that employers engage with the new traineeship scheme, which helps those who need more support to be ready for an apprenticeship.

Plymouth City Council is helping young people make the most of these opportunities. For example, it runs a mentoring programme focused on getting them job-ready. Volunteer mentors are recruited and trained to work with them on skills such as producing a CV and interviews. The mentors receive training and are then matched with a young person. Most referrals come from Jobcentre Plus and local training providers. Since 2012, more than 30 young people have received mentoring support towards learning or employment opportunities.

Career coaches and intensive support

Provision is matched to the area's local growth strategy. The Plymouth and South West Peninsula City Deal will reinvigorate the region's marine and manufacturing sectors. As part of this, more than 1,500 young people will be helped into work through a range of initiatives such as the biggest wage progression project in the country, providing career coaches and intensive support to help young people build their skills and earning potential.

The council is concerned that young people are not always getting the right advice and guidance to benefit from local opportunities, both in schools and elsewhere. As a result, it is conducting a city-wide review of the advice provided at school and at 18-plus, looking at whether the pathways into local jobs are as effective as they should be and at how they can be improved.

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Gateshead – working in partnership to reduce youth unemployment

Gateshead Council has a tradition of providing intensive support for disadvantaged unemployed and unwaged residents. The reduction in council budgets has meant that the council is continuing the delivery of responsive services to residents by focusing on galvanising partners to improve the outcomes of mainstream services.

In 2013-14 this new approach to delivering employment support through partnership has seen the Council Job Linkage Team help over 1,100 residents make the transition from moved from benefits and into employment, supported by a number of key initiatives.

Best of Blaydon programme

The programme supports young people claiming Jobseekers Allowance onto a three week training and pre-employment course delivered by Gateshead College with support from the National Careers Service. Those young people wanting to access employment are then offered intensive one to one employment support by council staff, matching young people to live local vacancies. The programme has been highly successful; almost half of young people (48 per cent) have found work with many others taking on further learning.

North East Support for Youth Employment

The 'Best of Blaydon' programme will be extended across Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland and Durham local authority areas as the 'North East Support for Youth Employment', which will use £4.5 million Youth Contract underspend to provide support for around 6,000 young people in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance for over 3 months.

Commencing in April 2014, the programme will also focus on building strong relationships with business, providing a "Business Health Check" to look at ways to support growth, while simultaneously working with the young people to offer them the intensive one to one support and training to get them job ready. Young people will also be mentored for up to 6 months after they have started work.

Utilising new development opportunities

A new Trinity Square development in Gateshead Town Centre incorporates a Tesco Extra store, 47 other retail units, a cinema and accommodation for 1,000 University of Northumbria students. The council built partnerships with Tesco, training providers and the Work Programme, bringing together partners around a strategy to ensure that local unemployed residents were given the support and opportunities to access job opportunities.

Over 150 unemployed residents move into employment in the development so far, and the council and its partners are actively working with other retailers as they locate into Trinity Square to provide more opportunities.

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Bournemouth and Poole Borough Councils – supporting career progression

Bournemouth and Poole councils run a joint 14 to 19 service with a focus on ensuring that young people are informed about career paths in key local sectors, emerging sectors and growth areas.

The councils have done a lot of work to raise the profile of apprenticeships, and as a result both boroughs buck the national trend for apprenticeship take-up. Nationally, from 2011 to 2013 the number of 16 to 19 year olds starting apprenticeships fell by 11.6 per cent. In Bournemouth it rose by 13.8 per cent, and in Poole by 25.5 per cent.

Linking in to key local growth sectors

The shared 14 to 19 team works with the Employment and Skills Board and Dorset Young People's Forum to help young people access opportunities linked to local economic growth.

Until now, there has been a gap between real local labour market intelligence and what young people are told by schools and other services. In response, the team is raising awareness of key growth sectors, such as digital and media technologies, for example by helping schools to improve the quality of information and advice they provide. The team co-ordinates two groups, the careers education information and advice group and the post-16 forum, to share up-to-date information on the support, services and materials available to promote career paths. This includes the 'Decisions? Decisions!' guide involving over 50 local partners such as Barclays, J.P. Morgan, Sunseeker, local colleges and many more.

The councils found that most young people were getting careers advice from their parents, which could be useful but was sometimes outdated or inaccurate. As a result, the team is working with Bournemouth University to develop approaches that help parents provide better advice, guidance and support.

Employability skills and in-work progression

Bournemouth and Poole have low levels of unemployment but a large number of low-skilled and low-paid jobs, so the 14 to 19 team is working with employers in key sectors to create and promote positive career progression pathways to attract young people.

The councils have initiated a number of projects with employers, for example bringing those in the care, retail, hospitality and engineering sectors into schools, colleges, training and higher education institutions to talk about careers. A booklet listing local trainers offering in-work training has been widely taken up by employers.

Poole Council has funded employability activities targeting specific groups of vulnerable young people such as care leavers, those with drug and alcohol problems and troubled families. For example, a group of 80 young carers went on a short residential course looking at life and employability skills and received one-to-one mentoring to improve their opportunities.

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Basildon Borough Council – hardwiring employer interests into education and skills

Basildon Council is creating links between local partners to tackle low levels of attainment, aiming to prevent it from acting as a constraint on people's life chances and on local economic growth. The borough has a thriving economy but unemployment among 18 to 24 year olds is over 30 per cent.

Basildon has a low skills base, which makes it difficult for local people to access good jobs. The borough has around 110,000 working adults aged 16-64. More than 51,000 of them do not have Level 2 literacy and almost 27,000 do not have Level 3 numeracy. As a small authority, Basildon Council has limited resources for this work, so there is a strong focus on building links and brokering input from local employers.

Agreeing local outcomes

In 2013, the council ran an education, employment and skills summit to get local partners thinking about raising aspiration, achievement and motivation, and to look for ways of tackling this through joint working. Participants included the voluntary sector, the council, learning providers, Jobcentre Plus and local colleges. The summit led to two outcomes being agreed: improving literacy and numeracy levels and improving the employability of young people.

The partnership is now developing projects to deliver on these outcomes, with a focus on using existing resources differently and collectively. The literacy and numeracy work began with a community road-show to raise awareness among local people, explain how better skills can improve prospects, and signpost them to support such as adult education. This work is targeting all ages and one aim is to ensure more young people can access college or apprenticeships.

Building links with local employers

Basildon Council's economic development unit is linking up learners, providers and businesses to promote opportunities to young people. It coordinates a consortium of local businesses, schools and training providers, which has been useful in developing effective relationships.

The council produces a directory setting out the services and support local businesses can offer schools, such as providing speakers, work experience and industry days. This has helped to increase and diversify employer engagement in schools. The partnership is developing new ideas for strengthening these links – for example, linking primary and secondary schools with nominated local businesses that can work with pupils on employability skills. Another idea is to encourage parents to get involved by speaking to pupils about jobs or helping with preparing CVs and mock interviews.

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Wakefield Metropolitan Borough Council – ensuring investment creates opportunities for young people

Wakefield has the ambition to reduce the numbers of disengaged young people to zero, and as part of its strategy, has focused on linking investment to a sequenced set of provisions that give young people with the most barriers to employment the opportunities to work.

Linking investment to services for young people

For instance the council is working to ensure young people benefit from a £8.5 million investment to stimulate house building in Wakefield. It has developed a linked pre-apprenticeship scheme with the developer, the Jobcentre, and the National Apprenticeship Service. The scheme focuses on giving long-term disengaged young people intensive support to take on an apprenticeship with the developer as. It has a 100 per cent success rate, with every young person in the first wave getting an apprenticeship.

As part of its Troubled Families provision, the council has developed a programme of paid work placements with the local Housing Association and Jobcentre Plus. The initiative puts employment at the centre of a complex service offer helping to support families to reengage. The placements are jointly funded by the council, the housing association and the Jobcentre, which collectively identify families with the most to benefit from the placements, and the housing association runs the programme.

In 2010 Wakefield Council intervened to rescue the stalled Trinity Walk shopping centre development in the town. It provided a guarantee of a loan to restart the development, and as part of the intervention it initiated a taskforce to ensure long-term unemployed residents were to benefit from jobs created.

The council worked with retailers through the Wakefield Employment and Skills Partnership group to determine the training needed by residents. This included working with Sainsburys, Debenhams and Next which funded 100 pre-employment places. A JCP colleague became the single point of contact, and was seconded to the council's economic development team to coordinate further activity ensuring residents benefitted from investment into the district.

The council is seeking to extend the model, building similar partnerships with other major employers in the area. It is now embarking on a project with the electricity generator SSE, to support their investment plans on the Ferrybridge coal fuel power station site.

Newcastle City Council – long-term collaborations building better services

Newcastle City Council, Jobcentre Plus and the Chamber of Commerce established Newcastle Futures as a small not for profit company to ensure effective collaboration between and beyond employment services. Between April 2007 and February 2014, 12,403 people have registered, with 5,920 placed into work.

At a strategic level, Newcastle Futures leads the discussion on employment services for the city, bringing together local services to add value to national provision through Jobcentre Plus, and using a singular data management system for stakeholders.

At the operational level, Newcastle Futures includes a mobile team of employability advisers (which includes Jobcentre Plus advisers, who are matrix managed within the organisation) that deliver outreach services across partner venues in the city. They also manage local level vacancies specifically those secured by the local authority via section 106 agreements, this includes an increased focus on apprenticeships for young people and work experience.

In the last year Newcastle and Gateshead Council have undertaken the Government's Youth Contract aimed at NEET 16/17yrs old young people, with the flexibility allowed through City Deal arrangements. Newcastle Council manages this provision and has commissioned Newcastle Futures, Home Group and Northern Learning Trust to deliver it externally, while Gateshead uses in-house resource. The contract has achieved national recognition for its performance compared to the national model. Newcastle's approach includes 'employer work experience' sourced and managed by Newcastle Futures.

Building on this experience Newcastle has recently been successful alongside Gateshead, North Tyneside, Durham and Northumberland local authorities, in securing £4.5 million of additional Youth Contract under spend, to work with 18 to 24yr olds making claim to benefit. Delivery is due to begin late April 2014. Newcastle Futures will deliver on behalf of Newcastle City Council their Client and Business Adviser roles, ensuring that full flexibility across all local authority areas is maintained and managed by the lead authority Newcastle.

Looking ahead, Newcastle Futures has recently re-examined their young person's approach through a piece of research, with young people and agencies. The project found that young people and the agencies that served them are concerned that the structural fragmentation of services encouraged at the national level risked more young people getting lost, and that consistent and personal relationships with an adviser was the most important thing to young people.

In response, local partners will continue to provide community leadership bringing services together, and the council will expand its support for employers to create more opportunities for young people. <http://www.newcastlefutures.co.uk/>

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Hartlepool – creating opportunities for all young people

The Hartlepool Youth Investment Project (HYIP) is the over-arching council project which brings together all youth employment initiatives led by the council and its partners cross the area, including schools, colleges, post-16 providers, universities and employers.

The project has been designed in consultation with partners to prepare young people aged 14-24 years for the world of work and to guarantee access to education, employment or training for all while developing employability and entrepreneurial skills. A wide range of provision is brought together into one strategy - such as mentoring, traineeships, apprenticeships, work trials, internships – including through initiatives led by the council, including:

Youth Engagement and Support (YES)

This project is a local initiative for 14-19 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at high risk of becoming NEET. This initiative delivers bespoke training and pre-employment packages to suit individuals, and employer engagement to create and support new opportunities for this group of young people, by the council's economic team.

The pre-employment training is normally carried out in small groups of between 6-8 young people and includes training that builds communication skills, confidence, local labour market information, job application skills, and understanding of employer expectations. Group learning facilitates a cooperative approach but training is also be offered on a one to one basis for those that are not comfortable within a group setting.

Each young person has an identified mentor throughout their programme and any personal issues or barriers to education or employment are tackled in a positive, holistic way, and can include issues such as drug or alcohol abuse will be signposted to external agencies. The council is also a sub-contractor of the national Youth Contract provision for 16 and 17 year olds, and although there is strict national eligibility, it works to bring together provision into one offer to young people, reducing fragmentation and ensuring maximum impact for young people.

Youth Guarantee Scheme

The council became concerned that young people were not receiving the right careers advice and guidance to benefit from local opportunities. In response, it bought together partners to secure €250,000 from the European Commission to deliver a local scheme providing an additional 30 hours of mentoring support to 200 of the most vulnerable Year 11 pupils at risk of disengaging post-16.

As part of the project, the council is brokering relationships between local employers and schools to provide pupils wanting to pursue vocational learning with an insight into specific sectors and relevant to local occupational areas, such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM). The project aims to ensure every young person progresses into a good quality post-16 activity place by September 2014.

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Southampton City Council – S106 Employment and Skills Plans for Major Developments

Southampton City Council has developed a bespoke approach to S106 Employment and Skills Plans, which ensure that new developments create opportunities for local residents to gain skills and jobs.

So far 32 plans have been negotiated, including with major new employers like IKEA and Lloyds Register developments and with a range of smaller developments, which have collectively created over 500 supported jobs for unemployed people (youth and adults), 150 new apprenticeships, and supported other activities such as work placements for young people and employer curriculum activities in schools and colleges.

The council is expanding this approach to their procurement practices and used it in appointing contractors to refurbish their Civic offices and in the procurement of the recent Energy Companies Obligation contract.

Councils and local partners are intending to develop the approach systematically across procurement areas and across the Solent area. It was therefore included as a strand in the council's recent City Deal bid to government and has been included in recent Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) strategies.

Within the City Deal, the council will be piloting an approach with the intention to demonstrate the potential for a national roll out. They will be working with the Highways Agency, therefore within the construction industry. Having this approach to procurement in City Deal and LEP strategies is fairly unique, however, it is an obvious area where Local Authorities can ensure that their residents benefit from and contribute to growth, and employers can access the skills they need to underpin economic growth in the area.

Last Autumn, Southampton gained industry recognition as the local authority lead nationally for this area of work when it was presented with the CITB National Skills Academy for Construction Award.

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