

Appendix 1

Scrutiny Review: Employability and Skills

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1. Preface

The employability and skills gap is one of the most significant and complex challenges faced by the City of Wolverhampton in 2015. The challenge isn't a new one but the need to find and deliver sustainable solutions has become critical.

As a City we are confronted with high levels of unemployment, low skill levels and a startling percentage (22.9%) of the population without formal qualifications. We need to reverse these trends to ensure that local people can compete, with confidence and success, in a diverse job market.

The City's economy is forecast to change: new jobs, requiring different skill sets, means that our focus must be on ensuring that local people have the 'right' skills for those new jobs.

During the course of the review we heard from a wide range of stakeholders including business, educational establishments, the Youth Council, job seekers, third sector service providers and various partnership initiatives. A significant amount of good work is already being delivered across the city. Our challenge is to ensure that those efforts are appropriately targeted, coordinated and supported.

The review identified a series of headline recommendations which the Council and its partners should focus on:

- Partnership working
- Skills and pathways
- Business and enterprise
- Resources

The findings of the review have also informed the Wolverhampton Skills and Employment Commission, which has been tasked with finding solutions aimed at improving the city's prospects for sustainable, long-term economic growth and prosperity.

Although there is no quick fix solution there is a shared and genuine determination to effect real change. Efforts to attract high-end manufacturing and other new jobs to the city must be matched by a skills drive and an unleashing of entrepreneurial talent. Our local workforce must be equipped to take advantage of these opportunities.

Despite the challenges I am convinced that by working and pulling together the City can be confident and optimistic about the future.

I want to thank members of the review group and witnesses for excellent contributions and effort made throughout the evidence gathering sessions.

Councillor Ian Angus, Chair of the Scrutiny Review

2. Summary of Report

The review group met on five occasions to gather evidence in relation to employability and skills in Wolverhampton, with particular focus on the challenge of high levels of unemployment alongside low skill levels amongst the local population. The challenge faced by the City is clearly significant in terms of how we ensure that local people are able to access jobs and therefore benefit from the economic growth in the City.

The report seeks to understand the issues and challenges for residents, the Council and partner organisations. It takes into consideration the current pressures for Wolverhampton, the overall health of the economy, the situation for residents and future employment trends.

The review group evidence gathering captured the progress of current mechanisms, initiatives and projects and the barriers that need to be addressed in the City and nationally. It emphasises the ambition of various organisations, public and voluntary, to push forward to work with residents and businesses to develop the right skills to meet the demand arising now and in the future through economic growth in the City.

The review group Chair has reported the main findings into the Wolverhampton Skills and Employment Commission focusing on the gaps and barriers which need to be addressed in order to plan for the long term. This report highlights the need to work effectively in partnership and to maximise the impact of current and future resources. It aims to influence better informed service design and more detailed information that will help to shape and develop proposals for European and other funding.

The newly formed City Board will oversee the employability and skills agenda and will give consideration to the role of the proposed Combined Authority in addressing the barriers identified to developing higher levels of employability and skills in the City.

The 11 recommendations in this report are based on the evidence received at the review sessions and the ambitions of the review group highlighted early in the review.

3. Introduction

3.1 Employability and skills was identified as a potential topic for scrutiny review at the annual work programme planning event on 11 June 2014 and agreed as a scrutiny review for 2014-15 by Scrutiny Board.

3.2 The core principles of a scrutiny review are:

- Setting up a review only when it is clear that it would have resonance with Wolverhampton residents and workers.
- Applying scrutiny only to issues where there is a real and legitimate opportunity to influence.
- Understanding when a 'narrow and deep' method of scrutiny is of greater value than one that is 'broad and shallow'.
- Being flexible in the conducting of scrutiny to ensure that it is tailored to the different demands of each situation.

- 3.3 This topic is a priority for the Council. In his 2014 speech The Leader of the Council said ‘we need to focus on improving peoples skills to take the opportunities for new jobs, that is why the council has been working closely with Wolverhampton's university, colleges and schools’. He also announced his intention to set up a Skills and Employment Commission.
- 3.4 Key question(s) that this review sought to answer:
1. What is stopping local people with low level skills getting into employment, what are the barriers?
 2. What are the jobs that are currently available in the City and the wider Black Country and what are those likely to be in the future which would be suitable for this group? What needs to happen to enable local people to successfully compete for these jobs?
- 3.5 The outcomes expected from conducting this work included:
- An increased understanding of the employment options for unskilled and low skilled workers in Wolverhampton.
 - Enhanced linkages between knowledge of inward investment and employment interventions.
 - Targeted, evidence based interventions within areas of high unemployment and low skills.
 - Improved intelligence to inform future interventions at city and locality level by all partners.
 - A better understanding of the barriers faced by local people with low level skills.
 - Better informed service design and more detailed information that will help to shape and develop proposals for European funding.
 - The review feeding into work being carried out by the newly formed City Board.
 - The review feeding into the Skills and Employment Commission.

4.0 **Context - The Scale of the Challenge: Employability and Skills in Wolverhampton**

4.1 **Overall health of the economy**

Wolverhampton’s economy is one of the biggest in the West Midlands. The City is a net importer of jobs from elsewhere and its jobs density rate compares favourably with the rest of the Black Country, in fact, Wolverhampton’s job density is higher than the rest of the Black Country. Wolverhampton’s manufacturing heritage is reflected in the number of jobs in this field in the city, comprising 14.4% (15,600) of all employee jobs.

4.2 **Situation for local residents**

Wolverhampton has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, both for the total working age population and for young people (aged 18-24). Males have higher unemployment rates than females. In terms of residents who do have a job, the highest proportion are concentrated in the lowest-status occupations. Furthermore, there are many residents in the City with no qualifications and the city also has a low rate of

degree qualified residents. Skills levels in the city, as measured in terms of literacy and numeracy, are also low, with many adults having only 'entry level' literacy and numeracy skills, which may impact on their life chances and employment prospects.

The Census data shows that residents born overseas have a lower economic activity rate than UK-born residents (affected by their age profile as many overseas residents are student-age). However, overseas-born residents are likelier to have degree-level qualifications than UK-born residents, portraying a complex picture.

4.3 Future employment trends

Future employment trends across the Black Country are projected by the Working Futures dataset. This projects moderate jobs growth in the Black Country – 4.2% between 2012 and 2022, or 21,000 jobs – with many of those jobs being part-time work for females. Sectors which are forecast to grow strongly are electricity and gas, health and social work, and professional services.

Although some key sectors may be shrinking overall, substantial "replacement demand" (new job openings when for instance, someone in the field retires) exists in almost all of the fields. The sectors with the great projected jobs growth are 'health and social work', and 'wholesale and retail trade'.

5.0 Findings

5.1 During evidence gathering the review group considered a substantial evidence base, including a statistical review of the literature relating to the current position for people in Wolverhampton with low level skills or seeking employment. The evidence was gathered from a wide range, of public, private and third sector organisations. Witnesses were asked to present their perspectives relating to current statistics, mechanisms and resources relating to employability and skills in the City. Visits were carried out to the job centre and voluntary sector job clubs, to meet providers and talk with service users during job club sessions and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) class.

5.1.1 Wolverhampton City Council (WCC): Scene setting and scoping the review

Dr Keren Jones, Service Director, City Economy
Sheila Collett, Head of Service, Economic Inclusion
Adrian Barlow, Policy Officer

The challenge faced by the City is significant in terms of how we ensure that local people are able to access jobs to benefit from the economic growth in the City. The level of jobs in the City is relatively high per head of population and yet the evidence demonstrated that the employability and skills issues facing the City are enormous now and into the future. In particular at the end on 2014 the City faced the highest levels of unemployment in the country for 16-64 year olds with a rate of 5.4% compared to a national average of 2.1% and that the City faces a major challenge in terms of the skill levels of the local population which clearly then impacts upon their ability to access employment and that 22.9% of people in the City have no

qualifications compared to a national rate of 9.1%. A copy of the scale of the challenge presentation is attached. (Appendix 1)

Employability and skills is a massive area of work and is high on the list of priorities for the City of Wolverhampton. There is a lot already happening and partners, including Government agencies, schools and the university are working together to address the issues in the City.

5.1.2 **Job Centre Plus evidence summary: 'Labour Market - Reforming by transformation', job clubs and partnership working**

Linda Bowen, Job Centre Plus Wolverhampton

The Government's overall role in the labour market is to encourage flexibility, efficiency and fairness. This means ensuring people move as quickly as possible from unemployment into sustainable work and ensuring people progress in employment to achieve their full potential. That in turn means us understanding that employers look for skilled, motivated, reliable and experienced job applicants and ensuring that claimants demonstrate those qualities.

Wolverhampton job centres are transforming their services to deliver the Government's welfare reforms by supporting customers with on line services and more intensive help and support to 'help with moving from benefits into work'.

Welfare Rights Service (WRS) and Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) work closely with the Job Centre to assist people moving from benefits into employment and to defend benefit entitlement during transition. Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) claimants are required to agree a claimant commitment with a jobcentre work coach, the commitment details the activity the claimant will regularly undertake to demonstrate that they are actively seeking work.

The Jobcentre Partnership Manager has been working closely with partners and providers to encourage them to help claimants understand their responsibility to inform JCP work coaches of any activity or support they are involved with so that this can be taken into account when agreeing their claimant commitment. The review group highlighted that some JSA claimants engaged in voluntary activities or volunteering placements with voluntary organisations have been sanctioned. This could have resulted because claimants had not informed their work coach of this activity or had refused to give up the volunteering activity when offered a placement elsewhere.

There has been a cultural shift in the relationship between the claimant and their work coach. Following a diagnostic interview that identifies barriers to work, accomplishments, transferrable skills and aspirations the claimant will normally continue to see the same work coach who builds up rapport and continues to give hands on support to help the claimant overcome any barriers to work until the claimant finds employment or flows off the benefit register.

Claimants not getting jobs may have a number of problems which impact on their ability and availability to move into employment. The work coach helps the claimant to look at barriers and identify steps to address them and works closely with partner

organisations who either already support mutual claimants or offer services to address the barriers identified.

JCP has been up skilling and training staff in this new way of working and educating claimants to understand more about roles responsibilities and skills. Work coaches in job centres are working with their claimants to help them draw out and articulate what skills they have. One issue identified was that claimants often undersell their skill base, how they can match and use transferable skills, which often people do not recognise as a skill because it was part of their previous role but not the main descriptor, such as computer use, administration etc.

The Council and Job Centre Plus are working with voluntary partners and organisations to further develop work clubs in local community buildings and the numbers of new clubs starting up has been encouraging. JCP encourages smaller and new work clubs to buddy up with other established work club providers. Many of the work clubs also offer accredited training which ensures a range of services will be provided across the City.

The review identified a wide variety of circumstances and barriers faced by individuals and that close partnership arrangements need to be maintained to work jointly to unravel and tackle the individual and neighbourhood issues.

5.1.3 **Talent Match Black Country evidence summary: The talent match programme**

Kim Babb, Project Development Manager

Informing businesses on how they can recruit talented young people who have the skills, motivation and fresh outlook that businesses need to continue to develop and grow www.bctalentmatch.com.

Talent Match is a national lottery funded programme for young people to address issues related to youth unemployment and the increased competition for jobs. £10.3m funding has been allocated for the Black Country in a five year project. Young people are at the heart of the project, making decisions and working to support young people furthest from the labour market to improve skills, confidence, motivation, provide work experience, volunteering and job opportunities through intensive mentoring support.

The young person engagement strategy is a three tiered approach:

- Referral agencies:
 - DWP – work programme returners
 - Work Programme
 - Voluntary sector organisations
 - Probation etc. – targeted
 - Self, peer referrals
- Outreach – hidden young people
Business engagement

The review group welcomed this project but identified the need for complementary work for other age groups, including those between 16-18 years and people over 25 years. The Big Lottery focused on those young people furthest from the labour market.

There are other conversations and initiatives underway relating to the European Social Fund (ESF) matching Talent Match funding, which would double funding and enable work to drop the starting age to 15 years to try and deal with the issue. DWP has also recently announced a pilot piece of work to support 16 and 17 year olds to fill the gap.

Talent Match is engaging with businesses currently and there is flexibility in how the Big Lottery funding can be used to adapt the project to where it is most beneficial for the young person. Support is available for the individual as long as they need it to move into employment, including assistance with soft skills, and communication skills, verbal and written.

5.1.4 **Employability Partnership evidence summary: purpose and functions of the Wolverhampton Employability Partnership Group**

Angela Hoyle, Skills and Employability Officer

A cross partnership group is already in place in the City led and facilitated by the City Council. The aims of the Wolverhampton Employability Partnership Group are:

- to ensure there are sufficient and effective skills and employment services and opportunities to enable individuals in Wolverhampton to enter, sustain and progress in the labour market
- to bring public and private stakeholders together to improve employment outcomes across Wolverhampton
- to develop clear progression routes for individuals to build skills and confidence leading to employment or employment with training using the “Customer Journey” to map progression phases
- to work in partnership to ensure that skills and employment services meet the needs of employers and individuals by identifying current and future employment demand and the skills and employment solutions on offer
- to assess and articulate local labour market needs to achieve improved outcomes and to work in partnership with all funding agencies to identify and close provision gaps within the market

The group regularly monitors employment outcomes across the City. This partnership working could be built on and developed citywide, working alongside City Deal, Talent Match and voluntary sector providers.

5.1.5 **Working Together Partnership evidence summary: City Deal Offer**

Jacki Lakin, City Deal Project Director, Accord Housing Group

As part of the wider City Deal offer the ‘Working Together’ pilot project aims to increase the employability and employment of 2,800 long-term unemployed and economically inactive Black Country social housing tenants and move 900 of them into work over a 3 year delivery period. The pilot will operate within geographical areas:

- Walsall - Darlaston South
- Wolverhampton - Bilston East
- Dudley - Kates Hill

- Sandwell – Princes End.

The target groups / eligibility criteria for this project are:-

- Social housing tenants
- Living in the specified 4 geographical wards
- 18+ all age programme, with a specific focus on 24+ age groups
- Economically inactive (any benefits)
- Long term unemployed 6months+
- Clients may be on other programmes – but should be recognised where City Deal is adding value

Each of the geographical areas had particular problems but the target group have some characteristics that are similar including 'poor skills levels' and 'will not travel'. The City Deal Project Director advised that there are four Community Champions and sector work based academies that will aim to deliver a holistic "Journey to Work" programme which pull together the key partner organisations and deliver tangible results for employers, employees, housing providers as well as delivering on the wider growth, Welfare to Work and the Government's deficit reduction agendas.

The review group highlighted the need to capture and recognise the skills and experience of people who may have carried out apprenticeships, moved straight into industry from school, or moved through the ranks before becoming unemployed with no qualifications.

The focus on social tenants was welcomed but highlighted the need to work with Private Rented Sector (PRS) tenants as well. Effort is given in Wolverhampton to helping tenants gain skills and work experience in projects for Wolverhampton Homes tenants.

The review group identified that there is a gap in provisions for older age groups, including skills development, work experience and enterprise skills and that the wider city would benefit from lessons learnt from the City Deal offer in the longer term and the review group highlighted the need to ensure the pilot projects are supported and work alongside other interrelated projects to develop skills and employability.

5.1.6 Youth Councillors evidence summary: School provision

Youth Councillors provided individual experience and perspective on the current arrangements in schools for careers advice and preparing for the working world.

The inconsistency of approach by schools for careers advice, work experience, work readiness and preparing young people for the work place, whilst still in school, was considered a barrier for many young people. Some had been supported to complete CVs, had practice interviews and had arranged and /or attended work experience. The need for schools to recognise the importance of young people being work ready and the need to develop 'soft skills' was highlighted.

The Council engages with schools during work week as part of the 'work pledge' and highlighted that business people should be more involved in schools.

5.1.7 Wolverhampton Council Enterprise and Skills Service evidence summary: The right jobs and the right skill

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[Not Protectively Marked]

James Cunningham, Head of Service Enterprise and Skills
Jay Patel, Manager Business Development and Investment
Tony O'Callaghan, Education Business Relations Manager
Resham Gill, Skills and Learning Manager

The Council works as a facilitator for economic growth by:

- Developing partnerships with business and the wider private sector
- Stimulating local business demand and growth
- Tackling unemployment and employability

This will be achieved by promoting Wolverhampton as the place to do business so that the Council is:

- Securing and facilitating support for businesses to grow.
- Supporting the development and growth of priority sectors and supply chains.
- Working with businesses to identify their recruitment and development requirements and assisting them to achieve these.
- Strengthening the links between business and education to help provide appropriate information, advice and guidance and develop the necessary employability skills to support successful transitions to the world of work.

The outcomes achieved will be:

- Attracting and supporting new businesses, will create jobs.
- Developing supply chains to our larger companies and the public sector will create jobs, and improve business confidence and investment in the City.
- More local people securing sustainable employment particularly when their journey to work is supported.

In a tight labour market employers are looking for literate and numerate people with soft skills – team working, communication, customer service and employability skills. Successful applicants are likely to be flexible, adaptable, reliable and punctual. Job density levels are good in Wolverhampton but many jobs, especially the higher skilled and higher paid jobs are going to people from outside the City and people in Wolverhampton seem to be taking lower skilled jobs which heightens the issues facing people with low level skills, such as:

- There is a shrinking proportion of the lowest skilled jobs available.
- There are skills gaps for suitably qualified applicants and very specialised local skillset e.g. technical skills. There is a need for improving soft skills to help people get the jobs.
- Being prepared for the world of work, applicants are not performing well in the recruitment process. Businesses want to see the right aspirations, personality and they will train them with the necessary technical skills etc.
- More long term thinking to develop future skills to factor for the cultural shift from manual heavy labour to eco technology and new industries.

The Council and Partners need to continue their efforts and commit resource to support local residents to gain appropriate education, education, training and employability skills so that they are able to take advantage of job opportunities as they arise. The review group identified the need to get the right inward investment and to work with training providers, education and partners to develop the right skills to get people into work.

5.1.8 Black Country Chamber of Commerce evidence summary: responding to the three main questions raised

Bhanu Dhir, Head of Policy, Black Country Chamber of Commerce (BCCC)

The Head of Policy, BCCC brought a different perspective to the debate about employability and skills and reflected that one of the challenges faced relates to the pursuit of entrepreneurial skills and talent, not qualifications. Without talent, it was suggested, Wolverhampton may lose out.

Some Wolverhampton businesses are growing fast, doubling in size and continuing to employ local people who may not have specialist skills but have 'talent', leadership skills and are good leaders. Making the links between sources of talent and growing companies is an aim of the Black Country Chamber of Commerce. There is a need to encourage and engage talented people into the City to develop and support SMEs: 90% of businesses in Wolverhampton are SMEs employing between 5-10 people.

The Council should work to get employers involved in schools, capturing the interest of young people. In every case trialled there were good outcomes. Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) is working with schools and colleges and has started to entice the top engineering talent. Other local businesses are suffering as talent moves on and new talent needs to be found.

The Chamber of Commerce indicated that to succeed there is a need to change the culture with the private sector taking the lead and that the private sector has proved partnership working does work providing that output measures are real measures and that what really matters is getting a job. It was highlighted that there are people developing businesses, craft work, jewellery and so on to supplement income and that Adult Education Services gives opportunities for people to develop creative talent and entrepreneurial spirit. .

The Head of Policy indicated that all the solutions are out there in Wolverhampton but that partnership needs to get better at pulling them together.

5.1.9 Wolverhampton Adult Education Service (AES) evidence summary: service provision

Kate Emmerson, AES
Julia Weston, AES

The needs for those with no or low skills has always been the largest area of delivery for AES, with provision responding to skills development:

- Foundation for Learning and Life
- Preparation for Work

AES wants to encourage people to want to develop skills, to see the value of them doing it and to make a step change from the low hundreds to thousands of people achieving qualifications. AES provide a curriculum to attract people, embedding Maths and English into every course and by doing this they develop confidence. There is a desire to pass on the learning to children's courses in schools, to engage parents and carers out in schools. Engagement is a big part of the curriculum planning going forward

During 2013-14 skills development provision was 41% of the service's education and training delivery. It is expected the provision for academic year 2014-15 will exceed this.

The AES has retained the breadth of services by focussing on those people with lower skills. Wolverhampton has quite a transient population and numbers of people requiring basic entry level courses is going up. AES offer careers advice to anyone, not purely for current learners - anyone can walk in and ask.

Every course costs to provide. If the individual meets the set criteria their course is fully funded. In some cases where there is a cost implication for individuals from certain cohorts the service will absorb the costs, although it will depend on the individuals circumstances. Community learning fee for JSA/ESA clients a £5.00 fee is charged to put a value on the course and it shows a commitment to the job seeking process.

The types of skills required in the City are discussed with DWP Job Centre Plus (JCP) and the Council, and working relationships are good with partners. JCP are to arrange a job fair for AES ESOL clients to celebrate their success in attaining reward level 2. AES also have connections with the college and work together to put on the right courses for older people.

The review group welcomed the work of AES and applauded the transformation into a current and valuable resource for the City to address the skills and employability agenda. The AES has recently received an 'outstanding' OFSTED report and will continue to work with partners and people to get the right skills in the city.

5.1.10 University of Wolverhampton evidence summary: Skills development and employability. Aspiration raising, pre-entry activities and employability

Emma Wedge, Policy Adviser to the Vice-Chancellor

The University has 4,000 current students with a Wolverhampton postcode. The local recruitment brings high numbers of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, high ethnic minority and often the first from the family to attend higher education. It has a commitment to economic regeneration and supports local and regional economic development, lifelong learning and playing a part in skill development for many older learning adults and school aged children. The University remains committed to local recruitment.

The Policy Advisor indicated that University funding has changed and that from September 2015 the university is no longer capped on the number of home and EU students it enrolls. She advised that the University has a lot of BTEC access students

and Deaf students and that it aspires to be a University of choice. The Policy Advisor indicated that building partnership working is important to the University, recognising the need to have a strategic approach to develop priorities and activities and co-ordinating which partners provides what services.

The Policy Advisor informed the review group that the University could do more to train nurses in the Black Country but is not actually allowed to train more nursing staff. She explained that training is allocated on a national basis and that there is a nationally set cap on the number of nursing places the university can award. There is no flexibility for accommodating local needs in the number of places that can be awarded but that the University is however exploring ways of enabling training when linked to another course or activity. The review group heard that as a consequence the University cannot meet the recruitment needs of hospitals across the Black Country.

The University employs graduates to raise aspirations in Wolverhampton through outreach work, bringing busloads of school children to science based studies increasing stem subjects. The university sponsors academies, the 'Education Central Multi-Academy Trust' is a wholly owned subsidiary of the University and has 13 schools (three secondary, ten primary). Working to develop school improvement plans which meet the needs of the school and the pupils with the aim of driving up standards within the schools and raising the aspirations of the students and parents.

There are a number of key successes demonstrated and a commitment to continue to build partnership working, recognising the need to have a strategic approach to develop priorities and activities and co-ordinating which partners provides what services.

5.1.11 City of Wolverhampton College evidence summary: employability provision

Georgina Parker, Director of Employment Skills and Commercial Delivery

The College delivers employability programmes in a wide range of sectors, which are designed in response to specific employer need or to broader sector related needs which the College works in partnership with Job Centre Plus (JCP) and the LEP to identify. Sector based work academy programmes are commissioned with employers and approved by JCP to meet the specific needs of the employer and gave a run-down of the student participation and confirmed progression into employment and further training.

The College is trying to connect with SMEs and European funding is available to 'skill up' people into employment. However, the difficulty is getting businesses involved in the programme. There is money to spend and trainers to train but no SMEs coming forward. South Staffordshire and Wolverhampton worked together to bring Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) jobs into the area, JLR do not pay for pre-employment training but every person appointed by JLR is required to carry out a basic engineering course in their third week of employment and JLR does pay for half of the course, the other half is paid through SFA.

The Director advised that Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) has worked closely with the College, she advised that the values that applicants exhibit are important to JLR as well as the engineering skills and as a result learners on engineering training courses

work on technical and soft skills. Many progress on to jobs either with JLR or with companies in the engineering sector supply chain to JLR.

The Director confirmed that the college works closely with partners and that future plans in addition to the on-going skills conditionality programmes are as follows:

- NOMS – Prison Officer training commencing 15th December
- JLR – Diesel Plant from early 2015
- Inward investment 'Wiggle' - awaiting confirmation
- Hospitality

The College delivers the pre-employment training programmes which include softer skills, on-line testing and mock interviews which complement the vocational skills but that the college has already spent its full allocation for some courses.

The review group considered that there needs to be a discussion at LEP level to better co-ordinate how there is engagement with the wider businesses in the City. The Chamber of Commerce is looking at the wider sector base and there is a need for more engagement with businesses, potentially this may come with the development of the Combined Authority.

5.1.12 Intraining training provider evidence summary: barriers to employment

Intraining as part of NCG, is at the forefront of delivering education, training and employability services across the UK. It delivers the Department for Works (DWP) and Pensions 'Prime Work Programme' and Skills Funding Agency (SFA) Skills Support for the unemployment contract in Birmingham, Solihull and the Black Country and the SFA Skills Support for Redundancy contract in the West Midlands. Key barriers stopping people with low level skills getting into employment were identified as:

- Lack of skills- competition is high with work programme customers competing in an increasingly competitive market. People with high level skills are lowering expectations to avoid being unemployed. However this will be resolved with higher level positions being attracted to the City through inward investment.
- Transport – a poor transport network affects many geographical areas where a high proportion of low skills jobs are available. Bus timetables do not correspond with shift patterns or routes do not exist.
- Drug and Alcohol Misuse – a high proportion of unemployed customers in the area have drug issues and this has impact on large scale recruitments for an employer such as Transline for Amazon. At least three to four out of every ten people will not pass a drugs test. More and more employers are utilising the tests for their work force due to insurance purposes.
- ESOL – there is a lack of ESOL provision in the City.

The review group considered other issues that impact on skills provision in Wolverhampton and the wider Black Country, these included:

- the impact of the 'black market' and what impact this has on employability and skills training and numbers of people claiming JSA.

- transport - the Workwise scheme to help people to work in addition to cycling provision in the City and the potential for support from employers to employees to purchase bikes.
- transport - what is holding up changes to timetables and routes that impact on people trying to get to work. The review group agreed that the Council representative on Centro Board should raise this as an issue for consideration.

Intraining works closely with the Council and partners to develop provision in the City.

5.2 Visits to Wolverhampton Job Clubs and Job Centre evidence summary: visits to meet with providers and service users

- 5.2.1 Review group members conducted a tour of job clubs and the job centre to see the facilities and meet with providers and service users. The group visited:
- Aspiring Futures – participation with ESOL session and outline the work in the organisation
 - LifeSpring – attended the job club and outline of the work in the organisation
 - Job Centre Plus - meet job coaches and job club tour of facilities
 - Access 2 Business –attended the job club and outline the work in the organisation
 - Bilston Resource Centre – tour of resource centre and meet service users.
- 5.2.2 The review group were very impressed with the level and commitment of voluntary organisations who work with people who are currently unemployed. They engage them in skills training; support them to actively seek employment, skills training and volunteering opportunities. The job clubs and ESOL class observed during the site visits were well attended and it was apparent that the interaction was encouraging and helping individuals to gain confidence and skills to equip them when applying for work.
- 5.2.3 There were several issues raised in relation to funding for voluntary organisations to deliver against the growing demand for services, the balance and consistency of job clubs across the City and the flexibility of Government guidelines relating to Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) Work Programme (WP) placements, these included:
- Lack of inflexibility around Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) Work Programme (WP) work placements. More information is needed to consider work programme data. How well they are working, are they delivering and if placements would be better determined on an individual client basis. There was evidence of job seekers who were attending a job club and making good progress having to leave the job club to attend placements as directed by Job Centre Plus (JCP).
 - The review group highlighted that Adult Education Service (AES) and the college are OFSTED inspected whereas Job Centre Plus and the Work Programme are not, and therefore there is no way to show how they are performing.
 - There is a need for a different type of discussion in terms of employability and skills when the combined authority is in place. This is an area that crosses borders and would be best positioned under the combined authority which would have more

influence with Government.

- There is good partnership work developing on a local basis. However there is a need for clearer ideas about the niche areas for each voluntary organisation to work closer with the enabling sector. The consensus is that the partnership offers in the City complement each other well, particularly voluntary sector work with the softer skills focus and the college with vocational offer. The review group felt that there is potential to build on the partnership working to make a significant change in the City.
- Partners are working in the same direction and the Council is engaging in much broader partnership working.

The visits highlighted the value of grass roots provision of employment and skills provision in offering accessible support.

6.0 Conclusions

The evidence base from the review highlights what the Council needs to do to get people with low level skills and qualifications into employment. It also feeds detailed baseline information into the independent Employment and Skills Commission work. The role of the Commission will be to ensure that Wolverhampton has the appropriately skilled workforce required to support the City's economic growth, to support the sustainability of businesses in the City and critically to ensure our residents and young people have access to the right skills provision to give them the best chance of securing employment, developing their careers and staying in employment. The main conclusions arising from the scrutiny review were as follows:

6.1.1 Partnership working

- Effective and accountable partnership working is vital if we are to address skills and employability issues in the City.
- The Council has a key role of influence and brokerage and this needs to ensure a far greater understanding of the support available across agencies and the customer journey for our residents seeking work. This should provide clarity on progression routes and the barriers faced by local people.
- The value of delivery through community venues was highlighted as good practice.

6.1.2 Skills and pathways to work

- We need a far greater understanding of the reasons why individuals are not employed by businesses to inform our future learning/skills and employability support work. This needs to be consistently collected and analysed.
- There is a need to identify talent in the city and to address the softer skills issues including attitude.
- Work experience is important and needs further development across agencies to enable local people to develop these softer work skills and be 'work ready.'
- We need a fuller understanding of the position within our local areas/wards to inform more targeted provision with greater impact. We need a greater reach into target areas

- We need to address the gap in provision for older age groups including work experience, skills development and enterprise skills.
- Our skills interventions need to closely reflect the projected business growth sectors for the City/region. To achieve this we will need robust evidence of future projected growth areas.
- We need to link with and learn from key local initiatives such as Talent Match and City Deal.
- There is a need for a strategy to help older people back into employment with a range of adult education and support to re-skill and the need to have flexibility for people in employment and wanting to improve skills and progress.
- The fractured nature of support for people unemployed and on JSA needs to be addressed.
- We need more data from schools relating to take up of alternative pathways to work such as cultural effort and sport.

6.1.3 Business and enterprise

- A culture of entrepreneurialism is vital and needs further development/nurturing. We are not currently recognising or supporting the growth in this area or its future potential.
- We need a consistent business/work experience offer in our schools.
- An issue has been highlighted of the need for businesses to see the added value of training their employees. This needs greater work with businesses and a greater reach to smaller companies.
- There is a disconnect between schools and businesses which links to why so many young people were not getting levels of attainment. The review group highlighted the need for a strategy and long-term plan to get young people ready to leave school and into employment, further training or apprenticeships.
- Business leaders need to look at training and development in businesses as an integral factor in sustainable success for the business and people in the City.

6.1.4 Resources

- The scale of the challenge for the city means that interventions need to be deliverable and quantifiable.
- There is a considerable gap between demand and resource in the City to improve employability and skills, taking into consideration the vast numbers that need to be helped and the reducing resources for provision in the public and voluntary sectors.
- There is a need to develop the employability and skills team to gather intelligence, broker partner relationships and work closely with businesses in the City.

6.2 The Chair, Cllr Ian Angus presented the initial findings of the review group to the Skills and Employment Commission on 6 January 2015 and feedback was:

- That statistical information and evidence to the Skills and Employment Commission had been informed and strengthened by the scrutiny review group evidence.
- The findings of the scrutiny review had helped the Skills and Employment Commission to focus on what needs to be done in terms of moving forward.

- Wider partners are saying the same things as the scrutiny review.
- The Skills and Employment Commission has broader influence to take forward partnership and Government issues

6.3 The review has informed the Skills and Employment Commission about the significant challenge of high levels of unemployment alongside low skills levels amongst the local population at its first meeting and will be able to feed the scrutiny perspective and recommendations into the next session when the Commission considers its key lines of enquiry.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations arising from the conclusion of the review group are:

- R1. That the Council takes a stronger role as the champion and honest broker within and across partnership forums to ensure that employment and skills outcomes are effectively delivered.
- R2. That the Council utilises its role of champion and honest broker within partnership working to generate confidence and credibility in the capability of the City to deliver against the employability and skills agenda, linking strongly with the Council's Corporate Communications Team.
- R3. That the City develops a long term cross partnership strategy for employability and skills to achieve a step change in reducing the number of the working age population with no qualifications and not in employment. The strategy should:
- provide clarity of roles and responsibilities whilst also ensuring quality provision
 - make provision for oversight and accountability, consideration should be given to establishing a bespoke forum to maintain oversight of this agenda
 - take into account the extent of the issues facing the City and ensure interventions are scalable and closely aligned to the emerging work on the Combined Authority
 - ensure consistency of approach for young people in the City
- R4. That schools be strongly encouraged to fully engage in the partnerships in the City that are dealing with employability and skills issues to meet the reasonable expectation that schools will support young people to develop soft skills, receive careers advice and gain work experience to get work ready.
- R5. That the Council has a key role as an influencer for example specific work needs to be undertaken with Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) to consider more flexibility regarding Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) and voluntary work experience arrangements. This influencing role needs to extend to issues of skills and employability that relate to the combined authority.
- R6. That Partnership working needs to ensure a far greater understanding of the support available across agencies in terms of the customer journey for our residents seeking work.
- R7. That the Council and its partners implement a series of initiatives, which include:

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- a) A toolkit outlining the available support for aspirant individuals in the City to enable them to access employment and enterprise
- b) A mentoring programme for entrepreneurs
- c) Collaborating to deliver a joined up, high quality work experience programme
- d) A multi-agency volunteering strategy that includes employment pathways for volunteers
- e) A clear pathway of support for young people to get work ready, including consistency relating to work experience opportunities and the development of life skills.

- R8. That the City develops appropriate business support to enable the growth and development of small and mediums size enterprises (SMEs) and should offer targeted support to budding entrepreneurs and innovators. This should build on the work of the Black Country Growth Hub and the business led forums in the city.
- R9. That the Council works closely with businesses to ensure that they recognise the value, and return on investment, to their business from training their employees and supporting career progression.
- R10. That the Council develop and effectively utilise a robust intelligence base to better understand the trends in business growth and job opportunities, future skills needs, and resident profiles. This should include specific intelligence relating to age, geography and other equality characteristics
- R11. That the Council utilises its staffing teams to gather intelligence, broker partner relationships and work closely with businesses in the City.

8.0 Contributors to the review

8.1 Councillors and co-opted members

Chair :	Cllr Ian Angus (Lab)	
	Labour	Conservative
Membership:	Cllr Payal Bedi Cllr Jasbinder Dehar Cllr John Rowley Cllr Stephen Simkins Cllr Tersaim Singh Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman Cllr Martin Waite Cllr Daniel Warren	Cllr Mark Evans Cllr Christopher Haynes Cllr Arun Photay
Youth Council	Samrita Basra Emma Curran	Jacob Bloomer Arnold Majecha

8.2 **Officer Support**

Strategic Director: Tim Johnson, Place
Lead Officer: Dr Keren Jones, Service Director, City Economy
Scrutiny link officer: Sheila Collett, Head of Service, Economic Inclusion
Scrutiny Officer: Deb Breedon, Governance

8.3 **Cabinet Members**

Cllr Peter Bilson, Economic Regeneration and Prosperity
Cllr Phil Page, Schools, Skills and Learning
Cllr Elias Mattu, Leisure and Community

8.4 **Witnesses**

- Dr Keren Jones, Service Director, City Economy, WCC
- Sheila Collett, Head of Service, Economic Inclusion, WCC
- Adrian Barlow, Policy Officer, WCC
- James Cunningham, Head of Service Enterprise and Skills, WCC
- Jay Patel, Manager Business Development and Investment, WCC
- Tony O'Callaghan, Education Business Relations Manager, WCC
- Resham Gill, Skills and Learning Manager
- Angela Hoyle, skills and employability officer, WCC
- Linda Bowen, Job Centre Plus Wolverhampton, DWP
- Kim Babb, Project Development Manager, Talent Match
- Jacki Lakin, City Deal Project Director, Accord Housing Group
- Bhanu Dhir, Black Country Chamber of Commerce
- Kate Emmerson, AES
- Julia Weston, AES
- Emma Wedge, Policy Adviser to the Vice-Chancellor, University of Wolverhampton
- Georgina Parker, Director of Employment Skills and Commercial Delivery, City of Wolverhampton College
- Aspiring Futures
- LifeSpring
- Access 2 Business
- Bilston Resource Centre

8.5 **Evidence Sources: The Scale of the Challenge**

Commuting patterns (net flows back and forth) - [Census 2011](#)
Travel to Work Area (TTWA) - [ONS Travel To Work Area](#)
Job Density - [NOMIS Labour Market Profile](#)
Gross Value Added (GVA) - [ONS Regional GVA, Tables 3.1 & 3.2](#)
Employee Jobs within Wolverhampton - [Business Register & Employment Survey](#)
Unemployment - [Claimant Count](#)
Out-of-Work Benefits - [DWP Benefits](#)
Qualifications: 'No Qualifications' and Level 4+ NVQ - [Annual Population Survey](#)
Skills of residents - [Skills For Life Survey 2011](#)
Jobs held by residents, their occupations - [Census 2011](#)
Future employment trends – [UKCES Working Futures](#)