

Bath & North East Somerset Council	
MEETING:	Health and Wellbeing Board
MEETING DATE:	6 November 2013
TITLE:	Health and Wellbeing Network Feedback
WARD:	All
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	
List of attachments to this report:	
None	

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The B&NES Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy identifies fairer life chances as one of its three key themes. Key to creating fairer life chances are people's educational outcomes and their employment status.
- 1.2 There is strong evidence that our education, skills and work can have significant impacts on our physical and mental health and wellbeing and that worklessness is associated with poorer physical and mental health and wellbeing. Whilst the nature and quality of work needs to be taken into account as well as broader context, the beneficial effects of work generally outweigh the risks, and are greater than the harmful effects of long-term unemployment or prolonged sickness absence.
- 1.3 The Healthwatch B&NES Health and Wellbeing Network meeting on 18 September 2013 was an opportunity for health and social care providers and other interested parties to discuss, in more detail, the benefits of work and wellbeing. Conversation included looking at potential gaps in support as well as how joined up working and an understanding of the different elements of support available can help to promote skills and employment opportunities locally.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Board is asked to:

- Note the key recommendations from the health and wellbeing network discussion:
 - **Responsibility for skills and workforce development** - enabling people to make the most of their life chances is not the role of one particular agency but requires a commitment across schools, employers, providers and public services. This includes actions such as endorsing the value of volunteering as a valuable and beneficial life skill, promoting positive role models, and signposting to the diverse range of local providers who offer support and training. Other simple steps such as constructive feedback

from employers on why applicants are unsuccessful can help to reduce barriers to work.

- **Resilience** – delivering and promoting activities that help raise confidence and self-esteem, tackle isolation and improve people’s broad social skills can make a valuable contribution to a person’s development.
- **Access** - improving accessibility in relation to information and IT would significantly reduce barriers that many people experience in being able to work and make the most of their life chances.
- **Specialist support** - The workshops all highlighted gaps around specialist support including support for children aged 5-11 and for disabled people.

3 THE REPORT

3.1 The Healthwatch B&NES Health and Wellbeing Network was held on Wednesday 18 September 2013 and the meeting was attended by 43 people. John Wilkinson, Acting Divisional Director – Regeneration, Skills and Employment, Bath and North East Somerset Council gave a presentation on Working and Wellbeing - Creating Fairer Life Chances.

3.2 The presentation was followed by 5 different workshop groups looking at: family support/ early years; young people and education; employers; worklessness; returning to work. People were able to take part in either one discussion or as many as they wanted.

3.3 In groups, participants discussed:

- (1) What opportunities or support are available which might help address the barriers faced by people in making the most of their life chances;
- (2) What are the barriers faced by people in making the most of their life chances and how does this affect their health and wellbeing;
- (3) What prevents people accessing opportunities or support available and are there gaps in support locally.

3.4 In summary, the groups highlighted the following points:

Family support and early years

- Support for parents, including life skills and confidence building, is important, and improved support is needed for parents who are already engaged with their children’s learning
- Primary schools could do more to improve children’s life chances by being more aware of, and promoting, options and support for parents
- Volunteering needs to be better recognised as a genuine and beneficial option
Community engagement is needed to help address barriers to working.
- There are gaps in support aimed at overcoming social isolation and in support for children aged 5 - 11
- Alternative learning for children and parents needs more consideration.

Young People and Education:

- The journeys and pathways for some young people are very long and complex, and services shouldn't be prescriptive about how long that journey might take them
- Project Search for people with learning disabilities is an interesting model that could be further developed
- Links between employers and schools are very important and need to be developed
- Information sharing and raising awareness is critical
- There needs to be better gateways for employers to engage with young people.

Employers:

- Issues highlighted relating to care providers and employment
- Whilst there's a high level of support available, it's not getting to the people who need it most
- Volunteering and mentoring are very important
- Benefits are a huge barrier, particularly in relation to care
- There is a lack of flexibility regarding workforce development
- More collaboration should be supported.

Worklessness:

- People's expectations are a dilemma which needs to be addressed
- Inspiration is key, demonstrating what families and people can do
- Mentoring is critical as well as education in preventing worklessness
- There are unrealistic expectations from the point of view of the Job Centre, in encouraging people to apply for every job. This in turn creates a negative impression of workless people on the part of employers because of inappropriate applications
- IT systems can be a barrier for people without access or if used inappropriately, e.g. overuse of online applications
- The benefits trap is an issue
- Worklessness cuts across all groups, but there are different ways of bridging the gaps for different people. There is a gap in terms of specialist support for particular groups' e.g. disabled people and young people.

Returning to Work:

- Whilst a range of groups offer 'returning to work' support, there are a range of barriers including:
 - The impact on people of not successfully obtaining a job
 - Not getting feedback from employers when applying for a job
 - Lack of IT as a 'digital barrier'
 - Peer support/financial support needs to be more widely available, than just those who are unemployed
 - Many issues for those returning to work (e.g. flexibility, loss of benefits/tapered benefits, gap between benefits ending and salary starting) could be addressed by Universal Credit, of which B&NES is a pilot area.

3.5 What are the considerations for the Health and Wellbeing Board?

- **Responsibility for skills and workforce development** - enabling people to make the most of their life chances is not the role of one particular agency but requires a commitment across schools, employers, providers and public services. This includes actions such as endorsing the value of volunteering as a valuable and beneficial life skill, promoting positive role models, and signposting to the diverse range of local providers who offer support and training. Other simple steps such as constructive feedback from employers on why applicants are unsuccessful can help to reduce barriers to work.
- **Resilience** – delivering and promoting activities that help raise confidence and self-esteem, tackle isolation and improve people’s broad social skills can make a valuable contribution to a person’s development.
- **Access** - improving accessibility in relation to information and IT would significantly reduce barriers that many people experience in being able to work and make the most of their life chances.
- **Specialist support** - The workshops all highlighted gaps around specialist support including support for children aged 5-11 and for disabled people.

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Background papers	Notes of the event and presentations available at http://www.healthwatchbathnes.co.uk/
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