



**Resources and Public Realm
Scrutiny Committee**
21 February 2018

**Report from the Strategic Director
of Regeneration and Environment**

**Employment and employability in Brent – Department for
Work and Pensions update**

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	1
Background Papers:	Employment, Skills and Enterprise Strategy 2015-20
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Matt Dibben Head of Employment, Skills and Enterprise matthew.dibben@brent.gov.uk 020 8937 1815

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 Scrutiny has requested an update from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in response to the confirmation of two of the four Jobcentres in Brent (Kilburn and Willesden) being closed. The DWP report is attached as appendix 1, outlining the impact of the closures and mitigations in place for job seekers in Brent. The covering report intends to explain the partnership working between the council and DWP.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 To note and comment on the contents of the report.

3.0 Detail

3.1 The Jobcentres based in Willesden and Kilburn are now closed, with claimants required to register and make their appointments at Wembley and Harlesden respectively.

3.2 The closures are a result of a national programme of property rationalisation by the DWP.

- 3.3 The DWP has outlined its rationale for the closures and response to the closures in the attached report.
- 3.4 The DWP report also outlines key areas of partnership activity with the council, which respond to key areas of community need in the borough.

This includes:

- 3.4.1 **Community Hubs:** The DWP are match funding the employment team who are going to deliver employment advice and guidance from both the Harlesden Hub and St Raphael's Hub (The Living Room) from April 2018. This support will ultimately be provided in additional Hub locations as they are rolled out (including Willesden and Kilburn). The service will support 45 into employment via the Community Hubs in 2018/19.

The service will be provided by the employment team, managed by the council. The offer will be embedded in the hubs to ensure a holistic response to community needs, working in partnership with housing, benefits, health and financial inclusion advice and support.

The DWP also intend to provide in-kind commitments of time from their advisors to operate in the two hubs, to help some residents to engage with the service. They will not conduct benefit transactions from the hubs.

- 3.4.2 **Work and Health:** The government has recently devolved funding to local authorities in London via the Greater London Authority, to commission the Work and Health Programme, to enable a local service response to needs. Health issues - particularly mental health - are prevalent barriers to employment. The programme has been commissioned for West London by the West London Alliance¹ with significant input from Brent Council officers, with the Shaw Trust being awarded the contract and due to commence operation on 28 February 2018. The programme will support 400 Brent residents per annum with employment support. This responds to a key labour market need, with a high number of Employment Support Allowance claimants (11,140 in Brent) with identified health barriers to work.

The Mental Health Trailblazer has also been live since April 2017, delivered by Twinings Enterprise on behalf of the West London Alliance. The service is receiving referrals primarily from the DWP and primary health services. It aims to support 152 people by December 2018, including 57 into work.

- 3.4.3 **Support for residents with learning disabilities:** Brent Council secured grant funding in 2016 to deliver support for residents with learning disabilities, to provide advice and guidance as well as working with employers to 'job carve' and enable higher levels of employment in the borough for this client group. The council commissioned The Royal Mencap Society to deliver this contract, who have supported 53 residents to date and 20 into work...
- 3.4.4 **Support for care leavers to access work:** The DWP has part funded support to care leavers across West London. An organisation called Future Path were

¹ 7 West London Boroughs, including Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, and Hounslow.

commissioned to deliver this project and a member of their staff has been based in the Leaving Care team. They have worked with 74 care leavers to date supporting 29 into work. The DWP has also seconded a worker part time into the Leaving Care Team to assist with benefit claim issues and troubleshooting and providing advice to the team's personal advisors. There are currently 287 care leavers of which 97 are NEET (34%).

- 3.4.5 **Troubled Families programme:** The council's troubled families programme includes X2 DWP Troubled Families Employment Advisors, who provide lead worker support to clients as well as supporting the wider case load of the team with specialist advice.
- 3.4.6 **Response to Welfare Reform:** The council has commissioned employment support for those residents affected by the overall benefit cap in particular, using Discretionary Housing Payment funding. Employment is a key mitigation to the cap, as sufficient hours of employment enable exemption from the cap. The project successfully supported 39 residents into sustainable employment in 2017/18. The DWP also provided X2 employment advisors to co-locate with the Housing Benefits and Housing Options teams in the Customer Services mezzanine, to enable referrals. More residents affected by the reforms have found employment, but it cannot be accurately attributed to the DWP or councils intervention.
- 3.4.7 **Connexions service support to 14-19 year olds:** The Connexions service delivered by Prospects supports 14-19 year olds of school age, who are at risk of NEET or NEET, and provide wider careers advice in the majority of secondary schools in Brent.
- 3.4.8 **Collaboration in response to employer demand:** The council works closely in partnership with the DWP to engage local developers and employers in the borough to secure local employment and apprenticeship outcomes for Brent residents.

The council has secured Section 106 Planning Agreements with a number of developers, working with 13 major schemes across the borough currently, notably including Wembley Park where apprenticeship and employment targets have been agreed and are being delivered by the developer. There are also strong employer relationships, particularly in Park Royal and Wembley Park, to enable access to employment for unemployed local residents. The service supports over 150 residents into work (jobs and apprenticeships) each year.

Key to this response is referrals of claimants of out of work benefits from the DWP. Often this includes ensuring pre-employment and sector based training is in place prior to the recruitment and selection process. Training is delivered primarily by Brent Start (primarily customer services and hospitality) and the College of North West London (lead providers sub-regionally for construction and engineering).

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 This report is for comments. Therefore no specific financial implications arising at this stage.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 This report is for comment. Therefore no specific legal implications arising at this stage.
- 5.2 In addition to any specific powers the council may use to provide support as detailed in this report e.g. the Care Act 2014 to support care leavers in finding employment, the council can use the general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011 to provide the range of services detailed in paragraph 3.4. Further legal advice should be obtained when entering arrangements and contracts with partner agencies to deliver relevant support.

6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 DWP to provide any assessment of impact caused by closures of the 2 centres.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 7.1 N/A

8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)

- 8.1 No impacts on the council. DWP holds the responsibility for its properties and staff.

Report sign off:

AMAR DAVE

Strategic Director of. Regeneration &
Environment