

**MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**

**FINAL REPORT OF THE CULTURE AND  
COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL-  
MIDDLESBROUGH COMMUNITY LEARNING -  
EMPLOYABILITY**

**CONTENTS**

<b>Aims of the Investigation</b>	Page 2
<b>Background Information</b>	Page 2
<b>Terms of reference</b>	Page 4
<b>Findings</b>	Page 4
<b>Conclusions</b>	Page 17
<b>Recommendations</b>	Page 17
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	Page 18
<b>Background Papers</b>	Page 18

## AIM OF THE INVESTIGATION

1. The aim of the investigation was to ascertain what learning projects Middlesbrough Community Learning offers young people and adults to assist them to gain employment.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Middlesbrough Community Learning

2. Middlesbrough Community Learning (MCL) is proud to provide high quality learning opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. As a focal point for the local community, they provide a wealth of learning opportunities and courses for adults and young people.
3. In their recent Ofsted inspection (February 2016), Middlesbrough Community Learning was awarded a rate of 'Good with outstanding features'. The service was referred to as having:

***"Outstanding Leadership and Management leads to many learners experiencing a life changing impact"***

4. The service offers the following courses/programmes to the community:
  - Apprenticeships
  - Traineeships
  - Community Learning
  - Volunteering
  - English, Maths and ESOL
  - Routes to Work
  - Youth Employment Initiative (Choosing Pathways)
5. In recent years, the panel has been increasingly aware of the amount of individuals unemployed within Middlesbrough and across the Tess Valley. While not the focus of this investigation, the roll out of Universal Credit (UC) may prove to have an impact into how MCL carries out its service.
6. UC is designed so that a broader span of claimants are required to look for work than under jobseekers allowance. The Panel is unaware of the actual affect the roll out of Universal Credit will have on Middlesbrough residents, however they were keen to understand what the Council was doing to help combat unemployment across the town.
7. The Tees Valley Combined Authority, Unemployed Claimant Count – September 2018, outlined that 16,820 were claiming jobseekers allowance and Universal Credit. The breakdown across the Tess Valley is shown below:

*It must be noted that as the unemployment rate numbers include those claiming Universal Credit, it may be creating artificial increases in numbers. Rates and numbers are calculated using the mid-2017 resident working age population (16-64)*

<b>Monthly numbers</b>	<b>Claimant</b>	<b>September 2017</b>	<b>August 2018</b>	<b>September 2018</b>
Darlington		2,280	2,415	2,465
Hartlepool		3,600	4,045	4,085
Middlesbrough		4,040	3,820	3,820
Redcar & Cleveland		2,920	2,610	2,620
Stockton-on-Tees		3,790	3,760	3,835
Tees Valley		16,630	16,650	16,820
National		765,755	891,380	902,765

Source: ONS,NOMIS, 16+

- The panel were aware of Middlesbrough Community Learning, however with the above statistics in mind, the panel were keen to establish, what, if anything, Middlesbrough Community Learning service were offering to help young people and adults gain employment.

### **Mayor's Vision**

- At the time the report was undertaken, the former Mayor's Vision 2025- Fairer, Safer, Stronger, the Panel identified Middlesbrough Community Learning as addressing **Fairer** and the priority of Fair access to secure, well-paid jobs and meaningful training.
- From the outset, the panel noted the passion of officers within Middlesbrough Community Learning to deliver high quality courses to help individuals. It was apparent that Middlesbrough Community learning was not only a vital service, but have officers/ tutors who are friendly, approachable and offer courses which develop long lasting memories for learners in Middlesbrough.
- Middlesbrough Community Learning also fulfils goals with the former Mayor's Social regeneration agenda by the following- Increasing employment levels; Increasing educational attainment (including skills and vocational); Improving health and wellbeing and Improving community life.

### **Middlesbrough Community Learning- Setting the Scene and a change to learning**

- The panel collected their evidence over a series of four meetings, which involved witnesses including officers from Middlesbrough Community Learning, learners and partner agencies.
- The panel first received evidence from Chris Kemp, Community Learning Manager who provided a background to community learning within Middlesbrough and providing brief information on the projects provided and the budget. The panel learned that there were two main training providers within the Town; Middlesbrough Community Learning and Middlesbrough College.
- The Community Learning Manager outlined that in 2011, the Government introduced a Strategy entitled 'New Chances, New Challenges', which was introduced to assist with the

challenges faced within the economic climate. Learning and skills play a vital part in this role in securing economic growth and therefore the strategy introduced a greater emphasis on teaching skills for life within lifelong learning, rather than leisure learning, which had been previously offered. Skills for life are designed to ensure individuals have the basic skills to be 'work ready'.

15. With the 'work ready' aspect in mind, the panel were keen to explore what Middlesbrough Community Learning offer to assist with employability. Whilst the panel were aware of other training courses offered by the service, and by Middlesbrough College, for the purpose of this investigation the panel wished to examine the Council's in house service. Specifically it wanted to focus on projects within the Adult Education Budget (AEB) to gain a sense of its achievements, weaknesses and put forward, where necessary, recommendations for improvement.

16. The panel, therefore, agreed to focus the investigation on the Adult Education Budget projects, these being:

- Adult Education Budget (Community Learning and skills )

17. The panel also agreed to look at the following:

- Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)
- Routes to work

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

18. Following on from the initial evidence gathering session, the terms of reference for the scrutiny panel's investigation were as follows:

***Terms of reference 1: To investigate Middlesbrough's Community Learning programmes and how they assist individuals getting into employment.***

***Terms of reference 2: To consider how the different programmes are managed (funded) and how their objectives are achieved.***

***Terms of Reference 3: To review the outcomes of the programmes e.g. with regard to the level of employment of learners following completion of courses.***

***Terms of Reference 4: To examine how the programmes link in with wider organisations and businesses offering employment pathways across Middlesbrough.***

## FINDINGS

19. From the evidence received, the Panel generated the following findings in respect to the terms of reference.

## **Adult Education Budget (AEB)**

20. The Adult Education Budget (AEB) currently stands at £1,563,132 which delivers two key themes: Adult Skills and Community Learning.
21. The Panel learned that the AEB was currently transitioning between the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the Tees Valley Joint Authority (TVCA). The Community Learning Manager advised that the budget would be transferred to the TVCA in 2019. However, this would be phased and the service was expected to continue operating in its current state until 2020.
22. The purpose of AEB aimed to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or other learning. It enabled more flexible, tailored programmes of learning, which may, or may not, require a qualification to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and/or enhance their wellbeing (ESFA funding rules 2018/19).
23. Whilst the transition of the budget to the Tees Valley Combined Authority is not imminent, they have agreed some principles for the management and delivery of the Adult Education Budget, which are as follows:
- Maximise funding to learner
  - Prioritise Tees Valley based delivery
  - Support appropriate, value for money sub-contracting
  - Progression – community learning to formal learning route ways
  - Outcome measurement-destination of learners
  - Quality provision
  - Linked to labour market demand
24. The panel were also made aware the Common Inspection Framework had changed to delivering skills, and in turn the TVCA was focussed on outcomes, linking to how courses can help individuals seek employment. The purpose being to ensure individuals can gain a level of English to use within a work setting. The change in focus had also impacted Middlesbrough Community Learnings outcomes, only 6% of learners went on to gain employment 3 years ago, and in 2017, there was 33% outcome. This percentage was likely to increase as the projects evolve and develop.
- The Panel complimented the service on the increased employment outcome, and were keen to explore the three projects.

## **Adult Education Budget- Adult Skills**

25. The Panel firstly heard from Karen MacKintosh to provide an overview of the assistance the Adult Education Budget provides with getting individuals into work. Karen provided the panel with information relating to Adult skills.

26. It was noted that the Adult Education Budget (AEB) was targeted at people aged 19 years plus.
27. The purpose of AEB aimed to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or other learning. It enabled more flexible tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and/or enhance their wellbeing (ESFA funding rules 2018/19).
28. The panel learned that the Adult Education budget (Skills) funds an agreed list of eligible qualifications that move participants to a positive destination, work, further education or apprenticeships and there were two types of funding:

**Legal entitlement:**

- English and Maths for those who have not previously achieved a GCSE Grade A\*-C or grade 4 or higher
- First full level 2 qualifications (19-23 year olds)
- First full level 3 qualifications (19-23 year olds)
- Learners earning less than £15,736.50
- In addition to the above list a new entitlement for digital ICT training will come in force in the 2020.

**Local Flexibility:**

- Flexible, tailored, provision for adults, including qualifications and components of these and/or non-regulated learning, up to level 2. Depending on their circumstances, funding may be available to fund the course.

29. As the panel were aware of changes to the Common Inspection Framework to deliver skills, and that the TVCA was focussed on outcomes, linking to how courses can help individuals seek employment, with the purpose of ensuring individuals could gain a level of English which they could survive within a work place.

In terms of Middlesbrough Skills budget , it was broken down as follows:

- English and Maths (29%)
- ESOL (58%)
- Work Readiness assessment (5%)
- Night school (3%)
- Supporting schools (2%)- in delivering courses identified by the school e.g basic maths

30. The officer advised the panel that they have excellent partnership working especially with the job centre who will refer individuals as necessary.

**Learning journey- Focus on moving learning closer to employment**

31. The panel learnt of the learner's journey :

**Step 1: Initial assessment:** in terms of ESOL the centre would assess their level of English

and what they require. Some individuals have no literacy, whilst others are educated to degree level.

**Step 2: Assessment:** learners go on a 2 week assessment, where the tutor will assess the learner's holistic needs in relation to their career aspirations. The tutor will have mixed ESOL groups to mix with native speakers, this helped with social cohesion and broke down barriers. The sessions were also centred on the local area, so that learners have pride in where they are from.

**Step 3: Programme of Study:** all learners have access to a personal advisor, there were qualification and non-qualification classes, which focus on employment and there were enriched activities. Intake on the courses was every 2 weeks, which was a request from the job centre. Low level classes had a session on employability every week.

**Step 4-Progression:** there was a focus on moving learners closer into employment, be that either employment, further education or volunteering. The centre had strong links with James Cook hospital, MVDA and street wardens.

After visiting the centre, the panel were extremely complimentary of the thorough service delivered by staff and the determination displayed by learners.

#### Case Studies from learners and comments

*Jason- was a gentleman in his mid 40s who had been unemployed for a while. Jason had low in confidence and his English was not very good, nor his CV. Jason wanted to volunteer at James Cook University Hospital. We supported him by paying his bus fares. Jason now is more confident and his change in attitude was so nice to see. Jason was now on the shortlist for prospects course.*

*Unsil is refugee. He used to work in telecommunications and had some work experience with BT. The tutors were very impressed with him and supported his application to Teesside University. The University have advised that they will guarantee him an interview when he has got his qualification.*

*"Normally I'd switch off but not in this class"*

*"It's not boring and has lots of activities"*

*"He (the teacher) builds my confidence and helps me understand things"*

## Outcomes

32. In terms of outcomes, from Adult skills in 2017/18 were as follows:

- 79.4% learners went into further Education
- 12.2% went into employment
- 0.5% went into voluntary Work
- 6.7% Other
- 91.5% Achievement

33. The outcomes were set to improve as more learners signed up to the courses. The panel stated their wish to have a further update on this in a years' time.

## Community Learning

34. Joanne Richards, Manager of the Community Learning programmes provided the panel with insight to the Community Learning and what was offered to assist individuals gain work skills and employment.

35. The purpose of community learning was to develop the skills, confidence, motivation and resilience of adults (19 years or over) of different ages and background in order to:

- Progress towards formal learning or employment
- Improve their health and wellbeing, including mental health and
- Develop stronger communities

36. Community learning was based across Middlesbrough within the Community Hubs, Libraries and schools and is priority driven, linking to Middlesbrough Council's 2025 vision; Fairer, Safer, Stronger. Community learning was done with partnership with Middlesbrough Football Club Foundation, NUR fitness, SAVVY and the NHS.

37. Courses provided include:

- Family learning- positive parenting, fun with numbers (address the needs of parents within schools)
- Confidence building
- ICT- basic, intermediate and ECDL
- Health and wellbeing e.g. SAVVY provide health and beauty but provide health and wellbeing training.
- Employability course- Steps towards, a project whereby individuals gain 2 weeks experience in a skilled job e.g. housekeeping within a hotel. At the end of their experience, they are guaranteed an interview and success rate is high.
- Healthy eating/ cooking on a budget – working towards the obesity strategy.

38. In terms of the Community learners, in 2018, there had been 2,930 learners and the breakdown was as follows:

Gender- female (61%), male (39%)

Ethnicity- White British (63%)/ BAME (37%)

Age- 19-24 (10%), 25-36 (31%), 37-48 (27%), 49- 60 (22%) and 61+ (10%), =it is noted that those 61+ tend to enrol on basic ICT skills.

39. There was a 96% attendance, 95% success and 70% are from deprived communities.

40. The panel learnt that each learner has an Individual learning plan (ILP) which outlined their outcomes they wish to achieve from the course.

41. Of the learners:

- 35% go onto further learning (most learners may have just left college, so this can often be their first step since finishing education. They may not have been able to go elsewhere so this provides them with the opportunities for their first step into training)
- 24% go into employment, which can be linked from the Steps towards scheme
- 4% go into volunteering, however there was a push to encourage more volunteering after the courses.



- 20% not into employment, for example due to parental responsibilities
- 17%, those are learners that due to circumstances do not go onto anything further e.g. mental health issues, lone parent.

### **The wider picture- in the heart of the community**

42. As the panel are passionate about community engagement, they were keen to learn about the relationships with wider organisations and businesses, and whether they offer opportunities and employment pathways for learners.

43. The officer provided the panel with two key examples:

- **Family learning- Abingdon and Ayresome primary schools**

Community learning were approached by Abingdon and Ayresome primary schools, who found a number of their parents spoke little English. Consequently, they had issues communicating with the school. For example, when they sent letters out to these parents they often didn't get a response. Parents also didn't have the confidence to talk to their child's teacher about any issues. Due to the needs within the school, Middlesbrough Community Learning ran a basic ESOL course for parents. The success rate was incredible, as parents had increased confidence, their English improved, many went onto further training and some looked for work. School attainment and homework improved as there was more understanding from parents.

A steps-towards course had also run in January within Abingdon primary school, as they had been struggling to recruit lunchtime supervisors. It was felt this would enable parents to gain employment within the school as well as gaining confidence and self-esteem.

Similar partnerships have been run in other Middlesbrough schools and the feedback has been excellent:

*"We would definitely recommend the partnership with other schools and organisations"  
(Ayresome Primary school)*

*"We have worked with MCLS for a number of years and have witnesses some great outcomes in terms of preparing parents for learning and to return to the labour market"  
(Corpus Christi Primary school).*

- **Steps towards working in the NHS**

The panel were made aware of the excellent partnership working with a partner (NUR fitness) and the NHS. The rationale was to increase numbers of BME working within a support worker role. From the scheme, 26 ladies from the BME community were engaged in the project. Of those 26, 6 went into volunteering with the NHS and 1 went into paid employment. The scheme was also nominated for Tees Valley BME achievement award.

*"Once on the course I realised I had made the best decision of my life! "  
"6 months ago I thought my life was over .....but now I feel life is just beginning."*

**Case Study- Lisa Fallows- Managing Director of Savvy Health, Hair and Beauty salon and training academy and Natalie, a learner and volunteer**

**NB-** Lisa and Natalie attended a panel meeting and provided evidence of the panel.

*“ I left school when I was 16 years old, with no qualifications. I didn't know what to do, and college just wasn't for me, so I went to Middlesbrough Community Learning and got my English and Maths. Whilst I was there I knew there was a huge demand for hair and beauty. I have 6 children and know the strain being a Mam, wife, work and supporting others can be. I opened Savvy in North Ormesby, which is a deprived area and I share the same story as a lot of my learners. I did eventually go to College and University and I am now a qualified teacher, but I wouldn't have done that without community learning as they gave me the confidence to do this.*

*As I understand the strain go being a Mam, I try and help people in the community who need help. Our courses are flexible, so they can be done round the school run. Having parental responsibilities can be hard when you have to attend college 9-5. But our courses don't just offer health and beauty, we also touch on health and wellbeing, because when you face barriers, you can sometimes feel isolated and your self-confidence goes low.*

*Because of our flexible courses, we have excellent success rates and retention on courses- you're not just a number, who are someone who we will offer support and advice.*

*I like to share my story with my learners, because I came from nothing and now have my own business. We get a lot of learners approach us, through word of mouth, because we are based in the centre of the community but because we are unique. We encourage the learners to volunteer in the salon and our courses are hands on. We deliver the course in a working salon, where the learners are taught how to take bookings, do a consultation etc. We work with a number of partners so quite often the volunteering will lead to other things for our learners and some have got jobs. But without community learning, this wouldn't be possible, so I would like to thank you for helping me and supporting me”.*

*“I also recently ran an awards ceremony for my learners and It was inspirational just listening to the stories of these woman”.*

*This is Natalie, and she is an inspirational woman. Natalie approached me because of the networking we do in the community. I saw something in Natalie and through community learners, I was able to safeguard her due to personal issues. She now volunteers 3 times a week and she supports other volunteers who come into the salon privately and she is well liked and a huge success. Natalie is now writing a business plan to open her own business but Natalie asked to volunteer because she wanted hands on experience and wanted to be 'work ready'. Natalie is on the road to her own business but community learning has changed her life and they have helped me as a business grow.”*

*Natalie:*

*“I went to Savvy, because college wasn't for me. I'm 30 and I have 5 children. I couldn't get to college because of transport and childcare but with Savvy it is in the community, I can walk there and I can juggle the kids.*

*Before I went to Savvy it was really hard. The night before I approached Lisa, I was in a really dark place and I wanted to end my life, but something in me stopped me. I felt selfish and knew that my kids needed me and I somehow got the courage to go to Lisa. She took one look at me and said “are you alright?” and a year on I am now volunteering in the salon.*

*Lisa listened to me and safeguarded me and she made me feel like I was something and not worthless. I think she is amazing and she is a role model. I know now that I was being selfish but my mental health was so low. I wouldn't get out of bed, or do my hair or makeup. My Mam had to take the kids to school. I do still get down days but I am out of that way of thinking and now look forward to my days.*

*I love working in Savvy and when I started my course we had to do role play of welcoming clients and doing bookings, to me this is the best way to learn”.*

44. From the evidence provided, the panel could see the huge benefit provided to the community through the Adult Education Budget, without the courses and opportunities provided, many individuals would not have basic English and not given the vital life opportunities, like Natalie from the case study, to improve their lives and mental wellbeing.

### **Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)**

45. The panel also heard evidence from Terry Frank, Coordinator of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI). The panel were made aware that the YEI was created by the European Commission in 2013, which was to target regions with a high youth unemployment rate. The initiative in the Tees Valley is called, Tees Valley Pathways Programme, and is part funded by the European Social Fund and supported under the Youth Employment Initiative.

46. The aim of Tees Valley Pathways was to support young people across the Tees Valley aged 15 to 29 years, who are unemployed and/ or not in education, employment or training (NEET). The initial programme was due to run until 31 July 2018, however the programme had been so successful that additional funding became available and the application to extend the programme until 31 July 2022 was approved.

47. Hartlepool Borough Council were the Lead Accountable Body, with Middlesbrough being one of 22 partner providers. Any changes to the programme must be approved by Hartlepool Borough Council and changes or commitment to funding must be approved by the Contract officer. YEI was due to commence in October 2015, however due to a slight delay, it started in January 2016, with contractual arrangements completed in June 2016.

48. Tees Valley Pathways was to offer personalised education, employment and enterprise opportunities alongside innovative activities and bespoke support. The panel were made aware that the area of delivery revolve around four outcomes:

- Participants completing a supported intervention –
- Participants receiving an offer of employment, education, apprenticeship or traineeship upon leaving
- Participants in education/training, gaining a qualification, or in employment upon leaving
- Participants in continued education, training programmes leading to a qualification, apprenticeship, traineeship, employment or self -employment six months after leaving.

49. It was commented that bullet points 3 and 4 were critical to the programme and provided evidence of outcomes. The programme itself was very much outcome based, which received a lot of scrutiny, having 24 measures, audit and contract reviews and heavy paperwork based to show outcomes, e.g. if a participant gained employment for more than 6 months, if no evidence was received from the employer, they cannot count this as an outcome.

50. Tees Valley Pathways project for Middlesbrough was called Choosing Pathways.

51. The panel heard that the programme provided the following to learners:

- Employability and personal development
- wrap around support from a learning advisor
- Flexible, individualised induction and individual learning plan
- 3 week interactive 'Choices' programme, with 6 sessions around self-awareness, attitudes, responsibility, motivation and confidence.
- aims to transform thinking and behaviour - take control, responsibility and ownership of consequences
- Motivational approach with high expectations
- 6 months additional tracking and support following programme exit
- financial support - e.g. with childcare, travel, clothes and equipment and incentives

52. The panel praised the scheme and its extensive support to learners, as quite often it was felt that not having the 1:1 contact and motivational support can often lead to learners being disengaged. The YEI programme has a 'can do' approach rather than 'can't do' and this was demonstrated by number of participants on the programme. In September 2018, there were 477 participants of the programme, the target for 31 July 2022 was 830 and in terms of 6 month sustainment of employment, participants were 142 (as of September 2018) and overall target for 31 July 2022 was 332. It was commented that the Choosing Pathways programme was more positive than the Tees Valley average. Currently there were 5 members of staff with one vacancy.

53. Members queried the success rate of the programme, of which the officer presented a key outputs and outcomes table. In terms of participants, as of September 2018, there were 477 participants of the programme, the target for 31 July 2022 was 830 and in terms of 6 month sustainment of employment, participants were 142 (as of September 2018) and overall target for 31 July 2022 was 332. It was commented that the Choosing Pathways project was extremely popular in the Tees Valley.

54. Individual Learning Plan (ILP) to identify any training needs for qualifications were also completed. This may be able to be delivered through Middlesbrough Community Learning (English and Maths and ESOL) or if not providers are contacted such as the STEM centre at Middlesbrough College who provide YEI with courses/ dates and times. It was discussed that there was no direct contact for course delivery within the College, however it may be beneficial to see if there was contact officer who YEI officers could go to direct.

55. Satisfaction questionnaires completed by young people show the support for the programme:

*'Great help from advisors , they made me feel comfortable'  
'the whole programme helped me improve my mindset'*

56. The panel finally heard about some of the challenges faced towards Choosing Pathways:

- Job Centre Plus- claimant characteristics/ type/ numbers - The contract value is heavily weighted towards unemployed participants (JSA claimants). However these numbers are low and form a small proportion of benefit claimants with the greater number being ESA claimants and these are classed as inactive not unemployed. Also as numbers reduce those left are increasingly harder to help.

- Number of providers (initially 27) - these offer diversity but also means providers are competing for Job Centre Plus clients.
- Young people on zero hour contracts - currently classed as working and as such ineligible for support through YEI. It will be interesting to see whether the introduction of Universal Credit has any impact on this.
- Sustainable employment - this is the real challenge as many opportunities for young people are part time / temporary or zero hours contracts.
- Exclusion of those already 'on the system'- The timescale for the programme was now over 6 years in total. This means that any young person signed up to the programme (any of the providers) when 16/17/18 and perhaps not ready to fully engage would not be eligible to re-join at a later date when they are more ready to engage (say when 20/21). We have already come across a small number of such cases and this may increase as we go forward.

### **Case studies- Kelly, James and Nimra – Participants of Choosing Pathways**

**NB-** the young people attended the meeting and provided evidence of the panel.

*Kelly- " I left school at 16, I am now 21. I went college and then worked for 2 years, but I had to leave that job because it was very difficult, as it was not a nice place to work. I wasn't working for about 6 months, then got another job for 4/5 months and then I found Choosing Pathways. YEI has made such a difference for me, i wrote a CV and James has really helped me. We talked about what i want to do and he has made me realise I can do what I want to do"*

*James- When we first met Nimra, she was the most timid, quiet and lovely natured young woman we had ever met, but she was so quiet. In our first one-to-one, which lasted about an hour, Nimra spoke about a dozen words. We worked on different skills and Nimra went and completed the National Citizenship Service. Three weeks later, this little person came bouncing through the door full of confidence and skills to move forward with. I am very proud of Nimra and what she has achieved, as she is now an apprentice within Democratic Services in the Council'*

*Nimra- "You helped me gain a lot of confidence and I am so pleased I did the programme"*

*Anthony- " I was working in merchandising before Christmas, but I was laid off and I got in a bad way. The programme boosted my confidence as I lacked motivation, but I am now waiting for a start date for a job"*

### **Routes to work**

57. The panel finally received information from Joanne Richards, Coordinator of the Routes to Work scheme and Barbara Smith in relation to a project Routes to Work.
58. Routes to work was a pilot scheme introduced in October 2017, with £6m DWP funding matched by £1.5 million from the combined Authority. The three year pilot scheme was to support the 'hardest to help' move back into, or towards, work by providing joined up services, centred around the individual.

59. The scheme was aimed at individuals aged 30 years and over and those either in :

- over 2 years unemployed, or
- who had significant/multiple barriers who are unlikely to find work in the next 12 months, e.g. ex-offenders; disability; BME/ESOL needed; SEND; drug/alcohol dependencies, or
- who have had a claim for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) rejected, or
- were on the ESA Support Group (have a significant health issue but may be able to work with assistance), or
- were not in work but are disengaged from the benefit system.

60. The panel learnt that the key elements of the scheme were to support the 'hardest to help' to move back into, or towards, work by providing joined up services, centred around the individual by doing the following:

- Creation of multi-agency teams;
- Use of Key Workers' who can provide holistic support around the individual on the Pilot and into work;
- Targeted use of advocacy/ brokerage with employers;
- Ongoing in-work support (for the individual/employer) for up to 12 months.

61. The Pilot should also:

- be fully integrated with other existing services offered by a range of partners;
- cross refer to other programmes and aim to fill any gaps in existing provision, using flexible funding.

62. The project from the outset seemed very worthwhile, due to the increased unemployment over recent years. The panel were advised of the objectives of the scheme, these being:

- To use the progressive approach to help those furthest from the labour market move more closely towards work
- Engage with long -term unemployed , breaking down barriers and looking at holistic needs
- Identify gaps in provision already out there
- To increase skills and improve health and wellbeing
- Support those furthest removed from the labour market

## Targets

63. Targets for the project were set by the Tees Valley Combined Authority, who had set a target to get 273 people engaged on the Routes to work scheme, actual numbers were 108 (November 2018). This target was for year two (April 2018-March 2019). The panel were made aware that there was a high demand for participants on the scheme, however at the time evidence was received, there were staffing issues were preventing the scheme taking on more participants. Despite this, at the time, 4.5 staff had recently been recruited and officers were confident that once in post the target would be met.

64. 'Making a positive outcome', TVCA has set a target of 247. The panel were made aware that this could be seen as going on a training course, referring an individual to housing or debt advice, or establishing a CV.

65. 'Getting individuals into work', TVCA year 2 target was set at 13, and the scheme in November 2018 had directed 9 into the work place. This demonstrated the significant work undertaken by staff. It was essential to recruit the right people as key workers, who were able to understand the needs of an individual.

## Referrals

66. Referrals to the scheme come from a whole host of partners, including; self-referral, Job Centre Plus, job coaches, local authority and any service or voluntary service (MVDA/ MIND).
67. Due to the background of the participants, the panel questioned how businesses responded, and approached a participant, who, for example, was an ex-offender. It was explained that it was down to the business and some were willing to provide opportunities, for example, businesses in Yarm. The scheme was also unique in that it can provide funding to help businesses pay half their wages for a couple of weeks, or buy the individual bus fares/ new clothes in order for them to carry out work.
68. Referral of ex-service personnel was also discussed due to Middlesbrough's commitment through the Armed Forces Community Covenant. Whilst there had currently been no referrals to the project, the officers outlined that contact would be made with the transition service in the future.
69. The panel were also provided with the 'Learners Journey' which detailed a learner's journey through the scheme.

**Step 1:** Learners assigned a key worker

**Step 2:** individual plan is developed- this will address and identify skills learners have, training requirements and identify what sort of support/job they require. The key worker will also spend time discussing the barriers with the individual which has preventing them getting into work, this could be a whole host of things, including substance misuse, ex offender and parental/ carer issues. Individuals have regular contact with their key worker, where advice is provided. If the individual were assigned to a course, the key worker will make contact during the course to monitor progress.

**Step 3:** Once the key worker feels the individual is work ready, we will offer them the right support, for example, providing them with the correct IT skills to apply for jobs online, setting up an email address, help with job applications, developing a CV and giving advice on interview techniques. Once in work, the scheme offers incentives for employees to help support individuals in work.

Quite often volunteering opened up opportunities for work and this was seen as an ideal route for those who had been out of work for a long time.

70. The panel finally were interested in the intended outcomes and impacts of Routes to work.

71. Intended outcomes were as follows:

- Improved confidence, independence, aspirations and motivation
- Client more socially included
- New opportunities
- Volunteering
- Work experience
- No. of clients in paid work
- Increased income/financial security

72. Intended impacts:

- Improved mental and physical health
  - Less Isolation
  - Less reliance
  - Less reliance on benefits
  - Reduction in crime
  - Community cohesion
  - new industry- meeting new employers
  - Increased productively of the Town
- 
- Increased productivity of the town
  - Clients leading more fulfilled lives

73. The panel were impressed by what the programme offered, especially as the course was in its early stages of development. They further commended the commitment of the staff and the aim of the programme and looked forward to seeing further developments as the scheme progressed.

Case studies

*Trainers: "Officers were approached by a man who was really down and really depressed, he had been on drugs, binge drinking and hadn't worked for years. He referred himself to the project. They don't have to come, they are not forced. He didn't turn up to the next appointment so I gave him a call and sent him an email. Then he got in touch and he came back. A few weeks later he was binge drinking again. Then got back in touch. After completing a report with him, I started saying even if you don't want to come, still come. You don't have to get dressed in your best clothes. So he started coming all the time. I referred him to MIND and I went along with him. They absolutely loved him. He has gone on to one of their programmes. If he does another one he can go to a Team Leader and he can volunteer with them. Massive difference in him. He said I love running and my bicycle got stolen. He had a face full of spots as well and his confidence was low. I assured him it was just me and to keep calm. We got him an appointment for the Doctors. He got his spots sorted. We had the luxury of buying him some trainers. Now goes running 3 times a week. On a bike maintenance course. At the end of the second day he gets the bike to keep. He hasn't lapsed now for about 5 months. He is really positive and looking forward to life".*

*Teeth: We had a guy who came to us who had very low confidence. Smoked and drank heavily. He had been out of work for 5 years. We noticed that he only had about 4 teeth but he complained that he used to suffer with pains in his stomach. We got him a doctors' appointment and found out he had acid reflux. The doctor prescribed tablets and his stomach is now fine. Then I said about a dentist and he began to cry. He was terrified of going, so I look him along. After a series of appointments, he now has a full set of teeth and is loads more confidence. He would now look for a volunteer role and eventually look for work.*



## CONCLUSIONS

74. From the evidence provided, the panel applauds the excellent work undertaken by the officers within Middlesbrough Community Learning. It is clear that the programmes offered strive to achieve the outcomes set by Tees Valley Combined Authority, by offering courses and projects which equip learners to be 'work ready'.
75. Adult Education Budget courses (Community Learning and skills) are well attended and for some learners provide the basic English and engagement the need to feel welcome and included in their local community. Community learning and especially opportunities offered by local businesses are extremely popular due to their tailor made courses for learners, flexibility and for some are a lifeline in tackling mental health issues. The team would like a special mention to Lisa Fallows, Managing Director of Savvy Health, Hair and Beauty salon, who works tirelessly to offer opportunities to the local community, the panel were moved by Natalie's story and the support and commitment she has received by Lisa.
76. The Youth Employment Initiative - Choosing Pathways is an excellent scheme and provides youth people the opportunities and vital skills they require to enter the work environment. Middlesbrough Council has employed a number of the participants from the Initiatives onto their Apprenticeship scheme and have been impressed with the calibre of applicants. Communication with partners is excellent, however there is sometimes a need for a direct contact when referring learners to courses to Middlesbrough College.
77. The panel commended the Routes to Work scheme, commenting on its excellent objectives and particular focus on reaching out to those who have found it difficult to gain employment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

78. The Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive:
- That the Panel receive an update on the progress made within Adult Skills and Community Learning in 6 months' time. The Panel would be keen to learn more good practice in Middlesbrough in relation to partnership working/ positive outcomes.
  - In terms of the Youth Employment Initiative, the panel is keen to develop closer working relationship with Middlesbrough College, with this in mind, the panel recommend that YEI be provided with one single point of contact within the STEM centre for learner referrals to courses.
  - That the Routes to Work project be added to Middlesbrough Council's Armed Forces Directory and information on the project be passed to the transition service.
  - That the panel receive a further update on the Routes to Work project in 6 months' time, with regard to the number of participants since staff recruitment and success stories.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

28. The Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel would like to thank the following for their assistance with its work:

- Adam Allen, Director of Culture, Communities and Communications
- Chris Kemp, Community Learning Manager
- Karen MacKintosh, Manager of Adult Skills
- Terry Frank, Coordinator of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI)
- Joanne Richards, Coordinator of the Routes to Work scheme and Community learning
- Barbara Smith, Routes to Work
- James Jamison–Mentor of YEI
- YEI participants
- Lisa Fallows- Managing Director of SAVVY Hair and Beauty
- Natalie- Learner and Volunteer of SAVVY Hair and Beauty

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

29. The following sources were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:

- Minutes of the Culture and Communities Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 10 September 2018, 15 October 2018 and 19 November 2018.
- Tees Valley Combined Authority website
- Department of Business, Innovation and Skills- New Challenges, New Chances: Next Steps in Implementing the Further Education Reform Programme
- Middlesbrough College Website

**COUNCILLOR CHRIS MCINTYRE**  
**-CHAIR OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL**

The membership of the scrutiny panel is as follows: Councillors C McIntyre (Chair), D Smith (Vice Chair), L Lewis, J Goodchild, R Arundale, L Garvey, J Rostron and J Thompson.

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