

ITEM 7

Camden Local Strategic Partnership

Meeting	1 February 2008
Report Title	Draft notes on worklessness seminar held on 15th January 2008
Report by	Mike Webb Senior Policy Officer, London Borough of Camden tel. 020 7974 4328 e-mail michael.webb@camden.gov.uk
Purpose	The LSP held a seminar on 15th January 2008 at the Gymnasium on the subject of worklessness.
Recommendations	The LSP is asked to note the report, particularly the actions to take forward summarised in section 4.

Present

- Cllr Keith Moffitt (Chair of LSP), London Borough of Camden, Leader
- Shelagh O'Connor, Camden Community Empowerment Network and New Horizons Youth Centre
- Karen Wilson, Camden Housing Association and Co-op Forum, Chair (Group Chief Executive, Origin Group)
- Simon Pitkeathley, Camden Town Unlimited, Chief Executive
- Mick Hickey, Job Centre Plus, External Relations Manager - Central London District
- Richard Bell, Learning and Skills Council, Partnership Director
- Stephen Jordan, London & Continental Stations and Property, Managing Director
- Cllr Andrew Marshall, London Borough of Camden, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Equalities and Community Development
- Chief Supt Dominic Clout, Metropolitan Police, Borough Commander
- Michael Scorer, London Borough of Camden, Assistant Chief Executive
- Peter Ward, Camden Community Policing Consultative Group and Board member of the Community Empowerment Network

Also attending

- Gerri Scott, London Borough of Camden, Assistant Director, Community Development and Regeneration
- Satnam Gill, Working Men's College, Principal
- Paul Lewis, Westminster Kingsway College, Director of Business Development
- Emma Stewart, Women Like Us, Director of Partnerships
- Savva Savva, Job Centre Plus, National Account Manager
- Gail Tolley, London Borough of Camden, Assistant Director, Learning and School Effectiveness
- Amanda McLeish, Government Office for London, Worklessness Advisor

- Claire Tunley, London Borough of Camden, Head of LAA and LSP
- Mike Webb, London Borough of Camden, Senior Policy Officer

1. Welcome, apologies and introductions

- 1.1 As the Chair, Cllr Moffitt individually welcomed the invited speakers to the meeting and noted apologies from Moira Gibb, Rob Larkman and Barry Peskin. Simone Hensby, Charlie Legg and Chris Shaw also sent apologies and were represented by Peter Ward, Shelagh O'Connor and Simon Pitkeathley respectively. Attendees introduced themselves.

2 Presentations

- 2.1 Gerri Scott began the presentations by giving an overview of worklessness in the borough and what the council and its partners in the Economic Development Partnership are doing to address it, along with future plans.
- 2.2 Richard Bell provided data on the skills situation in the borough and how providers are working with employers to provide training. Satnam Gill and Paul Lewis described the work of their colleges including a case study of how Westminster Kingsway works with employers to address their skills needs.
- 2.3 These presentations were followed by a short discussion about the shift towards demand-led (i.e. employer-led) skills provision, known as Train to Gain. Cllr Marshall and Satnam Gill were both concerned that smaller providers would be unable to bid for Train to Gain. Richard Bell agreed there was a need to build capacity in the borough especially in apprenticeships and commented that consortia between providers were the way forward.
- 2.4 Mick Hickey set out the Job Centre Plus agenda to achieve an 80% employment rate nationally. His colleague, Savva Savva, went into more detail on the Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs) initiative. LEPs are a total support package for employers from pre-employment training through work trials and recruitment to workforce development. One local employer, Whole Foods Market, has signed a LEP and Job Centre Plus helped them to fill 400 vacancies of which 170-190 were from priority groups such as lone parents and disabled people.
- 2.5 Emma Stewart described how the social enterprise, Women Like Us, helps women with children find part-time work and employers experienced staff.
- 2.6 More information from the presentations is contained in the slides, available electronically on request from Mike Webb.

3 General discussion

- 3.1 Dominic Clout raised another priority group hitherto unmentioned – ex-offenders. Richard Bell replied that although there are schemes in place, employers are often unwilling to take a risk on employing ex-offenders.
- 3.2 Shelagh O'Connor said that a related group, homeless people, also found it hard to access work because high rents in hostels made paid work unaffordable. Simon Pitkeathley stated that Camden Town Unlimited were holding an event at Arlington House (a homeless hostel) with the London Development Agency on sustainable employment.
- 3.3 Simon also mentioned that the media and creative industries are the employment growth areas in the borough and efforts should be concentrated there – the Roundhouse provides young people with work experience in this sector. Stephen Jordan commented that even if those young people don't end up working in that sector, the generic skills they gain – communication skills, self-confidence, networking etc – will be useful in any sector.
- 3.4 Stephen went on to say that many employers are not familiar with the array of opportunities available to them to help them recruit staff. He commented that LCR worked on their own to recruit suitable staff and although they were successful, they could have saved time and money by using Job Centre Plus services. Finally, he commented that job brokerage did seem to be the most successful approach but that it was labour intensive.
- 3.5 Mick Hickey said that only three or four local employers were signed up to Local Employment Partnerships and more needed to offer opportunities. The Routeway approach offered by LEPs is important since jobseekers who are looking for work (e.g. in retail) are not directed towards skills provision etc in that sector. Consequently they are not job ready and often fail at interview.
- 3.6 Satnam Gill commented that local men in Somers Town in particular were finding it particularly difficult to find work after completing literacy and numeracy training. They used to be able to find short-term work but this no longer seems to be the case - they are now in competition with new migrants for these jobs.
- 3.7 Emma Stewart stressed that the key issue is employer engagement. Employers need a clear simple offer i.e. getting the right people for the job. This requires experienced job brokerage/recruitment staff, who come at a price.
- 3.8 Cllr Marshall agreed with both of the previous points – he recognised that although new migrants and local people are not in competition for a fixed number of jobs, immigration does bring down real wages and any advantage the latter have in language skills quickly disappears. Employers are in the end economically rational and we haven't fully understood the extent to which some local people are being left behind.

The Chair added that new migrants were willing to do unpleasant jobs because they would soon move onto other things – it is unsurprising that the long-term unemployed don't want to do basic or low paid jobs.

- 3.9 Richard Bell speculated that new migrants with no or unrecognised qualifications might be behind the otherwise puzzling recent rise in the percentage of Camden residents with no qualifications. He wondered if employers could take the initiative by making a pledge to combat worklessness in Camden.
- 3.10 Stephen Jordan suggested that the LSP use its forthcoming Civic Forum to move towards demand-led support for employers, to cut through the jargon and help them find good local candidates.
- 3.11 Gerri Scott said that employers should also look at their own processes. For example, the Council's own recruitment processes are very bureaucratic. It should consider replicating the approach taken to recruit caretakers some time ago when candidates were asked to write a side of A4 on why they wanted to become a caretaker. Qualifications etc were not relevant for this low skilled role.
- 3.12 Gerri also said that the council and its partners need to highlight to businesses the CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) benefits of recruiting local people from priority groups. On the other hand, Stephen Jordan supported Emma Stewart's point that there needs to be a business case for recruitment. CSR would be a bonus as it is a luxury for many employers.
- 3.13 Stephen Jordan employs people who travel long distances to work as security guards, which could be done by local people. Gerri Scott added that local people often have expectations from work which are higher than their skill levels.
- 3.14 Karen Wilson wanted to know how RSLs as a group could do more on worklessness. Gerri Scott thought that current work is limited to the Camden Social Housing Employment Project. The Chair said that the issues could be discussed in more detail in the Economic Development Partnership.
- 3.15 Amanda McLeish had several points to make for her perspective as an outsider:
 - LSP members also need to look outside Camden for solutions.
 - They need to make links to other causal factors such as poor health, social housing and educational attainment.
 - The Welfare to Work agenda will result in many claimants moving to different benefit streams e.g. lone mothers to Job Seeker's Allowance and this will have an impact on the supply side.
- 3.16 Gail Tolley said that as part of its 14-19 Strategy, the Council was addressing the needs of young people including groups like young

offenders to ensure they have the necessary skills for employment. It is working with local providers to develop specialised diplomas in Creative/Media, IT and hospitality/catering, all growth sectors in the borough.

- 3.17 She is also responsible for the Council's Childcare Strategy – affordability is the issue since new quality requirements for staff qualifications and the Foundation Early Years Stage are increasing the cost of childcare. There is an LDA-funded childcare affordability programme but its impact is limited.
- 3.18 Finally, Council-funded ESOL provision (including in non-traditional settings such as Family Learning) often consists of courses that do not result in qualifications because demand is from people with very basic English. Unfortunately this does not match up with the LSC priority, which is to get people trained to Level 2 (GCSE equivalent).
- 3.19 Shelagh O'Connor said that volunteering is an important way to upskill people, both through accredited programmes and general confidence building.
- 3.20 Richard Bell said that an appropriate forum was needed to take LEPs forward locally particularly involving the PCT, one of the biggest local employers.

4 Actions to take forward

Claire Tunley summarised the main areas where LSP members would like to see action:

- Supporting ex-offenders into employment
- New growth areas of employment e.g. the media and creative sector
- Lack of awareness by businesses about support that is available to them
- Routeway from claiming benefits to employment and beyond, particularly in the retail sector
- Local long term workless people who are being left behind by a London labour market dominated by new migrants
- Local employers' overly bureaucratic recruitment processes, particularly in the public sector
- Managing local people's high expectations about work
- Childcare provision
- Pre-qualification ESOL provision
- Taking LEPs forward locally

The Chair asked for a progress report at the next business meeting.

Ends