

**Cabinet Meeting: Monday, 08 July 2024**

**Question from: Councillor Blagbrough**

**Question to: Councillor Courtney, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Regeneration and Transport**

It's worrying to see youth unemployment on the rise despite the Council's positive efforts. The Annual Corporate Performance Report highlights 426 positive outcomes in 2023/24. It would be helpful to gain further details to understand if these outcomes represent individuals who have secured employment as a result of the Council and its partners' initiatives. Additionally, confirming the current employment status of these individuals would provide valuable insight into the long-term impact of these efforts. Ensuring that our initiatives lead to sustainable and lasting positive changes in our community is crucial, and obtaining this information will help us gauge the effectiveness of our strategies. Please can you provide all this information.

### **Response**

Calderdale's overall employment rates have been showing improvement from 2023, with the latest data seeing performance above regional and national averages, and higher than pre pandemic levels.

However, youth unemployment is an issue of concern. Calderdale Council and its partners have the highest ambitions for children and young people.

- In general, young people who reside in Calderdale can access a wide range of good quality Post 16 learning, skills and employment provision and programmes. Post 16 progression and attainment are broadly positive and above regional and national averages.
- However, this is not consistent across all outcomes and for all groups of young people. There are also some concerning reversals in previously positive trends and a lack of re-engagement provision for young people who find themselves NEET.
- Recovery from the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic both academically, socially and in terms of young people's health and wellbeing is a challenge which will not be rectified in the short-term
- There have also been significant shifts in the Calderdale and wider regional labour market arising from Covid 19, the exit from the European single market and the current cost of living and trading challenges.

Calderdale's Post 16 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy was approved in March 2023, recognising these concerns in Post 16 outcomes, particularly youth unemployment and NEET. The priorities set out in the strategy reflect the need to take proactive action, alongside responding to the needs of young people currently unemployed.

Examples of actions to support young people at an early stage:

**Priority: Education Recovery**

- CAL is working with 36+ Primary Schools delivering essential family learning programmes. Work is underway to develop a “Green” skills programme in Secondary Schools led by Calder Valley and Brighouse and a Primary Green skills project has been commissioned by the MCA to start Summer 2024.
- A Summer Internship programme has been funded by the Council for young people transitioning from Year 10 to Year 11 and at risk of underachieving in KS4 and not fulfilling their Post 16 progression potential.

The strategy was produced in collaboration with key partners and across directorates within the Council, that joint working has been continued into its implementation, with partnership work across the education, employment and skills system.

Examples of action taken:

**Priority: Flexible Provision**

- Revised the Calderdale Employment Hub provision and provided greater focus on supporting 16-24 NEET / Unemployed young people.
- Established the Nexus Key Stage 4 provision in Calderdale with subsidy from the Council) and recruited 20+ students to date.
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund activity addressing the needs of 40+ young people with significant barriers to progression.

**Priority: Talent Retention**

- Developed the Health and Social Care Pathways Project working with the LA, Calderdale College and Ahead Partnership showcasing career pathways in Health and Social Care to 14-19 year olds. And ongoing work with CHFT and Calderdale College.
- Established Piece Hall Academy working with Calderdale Music.
- Calderdale College secured substantial Local Skills Improvement Fund support for new Post 16 provision in Dean Clough around the digital and creative / media curriculum areas – to open in September 2024.

**Priority: Careers in a Changing World**

- Calderdale Employment Hub has commissioned the development of Careers resources and programmes to support Green and Digital sectors.

The Calderdale Employment and Skills Partnership brings together the key stakeholders in the local employment and skills system to identify and deliver against

shared priorities for employment and skills in Calderdale. Having recently led on the production of Calderdale's Employment and Skills Framework, it provides the basis for collaboration and join up across the complex system of employment and skills, including supporting access to funding opportunities, and the development of new innovative approaches. In doing so it supports the Inclusive Economy Board in its delivery of the Calderdale Inclusive Economy Strategy.

In 2023, an employment and skills practitioners' group was established to be a forum where front line employment support staff work together in collaboration across partner organisations. The group have collectively developed an employment and skills pathway for Calderdale residents to navigate what is a complex landscape.

The figures quoted from the Annual Corporate Performance report in the question above relate to Employment Hub delivery.

The Employment Hub has been delivering employability support to people in Calderdale since January 2019. The support is offered on a one-to-one basis and is tailored to the customer's needs. Advisors work with customers either face to face or virtually, using a blend of community venues and online to meet. They provide access to a barrier breaker fund which people can apply for to pay for training, equipment or transport costs where required. With their permission, advisors support customers until they secure employment or commence training which is moving them towards their end goal. All customers are invited to reconnect should they need further assistance and advisors maintain contact to ensure they are progressing.

Since 2019, Calderdale's Employment Hub has supported 1,776 people, helped 234 people into work, supported 1,012 people to reskill/upskill and assisted 213 businesses.

For the 2023/24 figures referenced in the Corporate Performance Report:

- 78 people were supported into employment
- 336 people were supported with upskill/reskill outcomes which include support with a CV, interview practice, job search, referral to a suitable training course etc.
- 12 people were helped to improve their labour market status (employed people who were supported to get another job with more hours/pay).

Our funded contract does not include resources to record if the customers sustain their employment. Employment Hub advisors do retain contact with customers, and have provided additional support after people have been supported into employment to improve their labour market status. In the current phase of the programme (from 2023 onwards), six people have been supported in that way.