

REPORT TO:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee 15 October 2013
AGENDA ITEM:	7b
SUBJECT:	The work of the Skills and Employment Strategy Group in supporting young people to be employment-ready
LEAD OFFICER:	Paul Spooner, Interim Executive Director of Planning and Environment
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Vidhi Mohan, Cabinet Member for Communities and Economic Development
PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:	Lisa McCance, Head of Economic Development

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	This item is contained in the sub-committee's agreed work programme.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	To examine the effectiveness of council partnerships in supporting young people to be employment-ready

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the work of the borough-wide Croydon Skills and Employment Strategy Group (the Group) and the role it plays in supporting young people to be employment ready and secure a job.
- 1.2 The report identifies the challenges young people experience when trying to find employment and how the work of the Group enables them to overcome these barriers and gain employment.
- 1.3 The Report also outlines the role of the Group in delivering the 'Pathways to employment' approach approved by Cabinet on 30 September 2013.

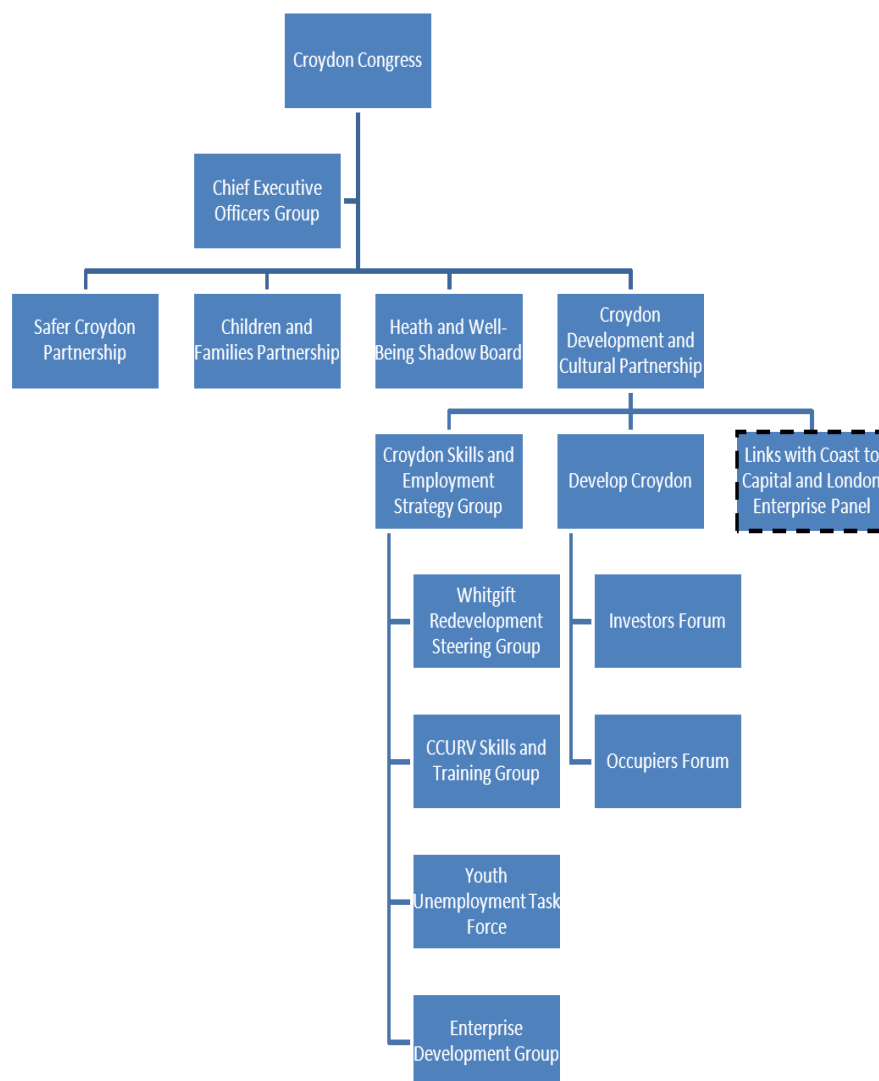
2. DETAIL

2.1 Strategic fit, objectives and membership

2.1.1 Strategic fit

The Group was set up within the overall structure of Croydon Congress, the boroughs local strategic partnership. This strategic body provides the overall direction of travel for the borough in terms of achieving the borough's 2040 vision to be London's most enterprising borough.

2.1.2 The Group is reporting directly to the Croydon Congress's new Economic Development and Jobs Board. The following diagram shows its fit within the structure.



2.1.3 Objectives

The work of the Group is governed by the following Terms of Reference:

- (i) Purpose of the Croydon Skills and Employment Strategy Group. The purpose of the Group is to provide co-ordination and leadership for the delivery of skills and employment in the borough. The Group sits under the Croydon Development and Cultural Partnership and the main objectives pursued are as follows:
 - Deliver the Croydon Skills and Employment Plan 2013 -2018.
 - Engage and work in partnership with business and employer forums.
 - Act as the recognised strategic lead body on skills and employment for the borough.
 - Act as the forum for discussing issues concerning employment and skills development.
 - Consider, develop and put forward for implementation solutions for tackling worklessness and skills development.

- Act as the lead body for agreeing strategic priorities (framework for delivery, target groups, priority locations,) with delivery agencies including prime contractors for the work programme and other funding streams (ESF, RDF, etc.).
 - Co-ordinate the work around public sector commitment to delivering Apprenticeships and workforce development.
 - Provide the link for joint working between the public, private and voluntary/community sectors on skills and employment issues.
- (ii) Working arrangements
- The Group meets bi-monthly and is chaired on an annual rotating basis, but should circumstances require special meetings can be convened.
 - The Group will be supported by the Economic Development team of Croydon Council.
 - The Group will appoint working sub-groups to carry out certain tasks, but the final decision to take proposals forward will remain with its membership. If there is a difference of opinion a vote can be taken every member having one vote. Decisions will be agreed with a majority vote. In case of a stale-mate the Chair will not have a deciding vote, but the proposals will be reworked to reach an agreement.
 - The Group may dissolve by an agreement of its membership.
- (iii) Membership
- Membership of the group is open to public, private and voluntary/ community organisations and agencies, but the introduction of new members must be agreed at a meeting of the group and endorsed by the Chair.

2.1.4 Current membership

Membership of the SESG is made up of a cross section of stakeholder organisations whose activities are linked to the objectives of the Croydon Skills and Employment Plan 2013-2018. Each organisation is aligned to at least one of the four objectives of the Plan. The sectors represented include public sector, business, training organisations, employment-related agencies, and organisations working with young people. For details refer to **Appendix 1**. Currently the Group is chaired by Cllr Ian Parker, Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities and Economic Development.

2.1.5 The Croydon Skills and Employment Plan 2013-2018 was approved by Cabinet in March 2013 (Min A36/13) alongside the Croydon Economic Development Plan 2013-2018. The Plan sets out the agreed priorities for Croydon in terms of raising skill levels creating sustainable employment opportunities and increasing the overall borough employment rate. Its four objectives are as follows:

1. Supporting Croydon residents to develop the right skills at an appropriate level to be competitive in the labour market and secure employment

2. Work with Croydon employers to increase the number of jobs and ensure that local residents are considered as a priority for filling vacancies
3. Support young people to be employment ready
4. Develop a coordinated borough – wide approach to delivering the skills an employment agenda.

2.1.6 Further details are contained in **Appendix 2**. The delivery of the objectives is monitored through annual delivery plans, the first of which is in place for this financial year.

2.2 **Key challenges for the young people of Croydon in their efforts to find employment**

2.2.1 Youth unemployment is one of the greatest challenges facing the country. During the quarter June to August 2013 nationally youth unemployment rose by 15,000 to 973,000. The number of workless young people (not in employment, education or training) for that quarter was 1.36million. Unemployment for young people is particularly serious. Unemployment scars for life. It means lower earnings, the likelihood of further unemployment and a greater chance of ill health later in life. The following highlights some of the factors impacting on young people and their efforts to find employment:

- Young people need to develop better preparation and motivation for work. Too many young people do not have the hard and soft skills they need to progress into the world of work. Attainment in Maths and English is crucial, as too many have limited access to high quality work experience and information and advice.
- The careers advice and guidance at school level is reported as being variable and that it could be strengthened, so that school leavers are getting the support they require.
- There are a large number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). More than one in seven 16 – 24 year olds are NEET. On leaving education some 48 % of NEETs have no experience of paid work and this lack of substantive work experience is a barrier to work, which highlights the need for sustained support for young people in taking the initial step into employment.
- Young people not heading for university need clear quality options for progress. For those not going to university there are too few progression routes to follow as they make the transition from full time education to being in full time work.

2.2.2 Apprenticeships

- The government promotion of Apprenticeships has created major increases in the number of Apprenticeships but this drive has highlighted weaknesses in the system in terms of quality sustainable Apprenticeships.
- Many young learners have more to learn than the Apprenticeships can encompass. They must develop skills to be employable in the first instance. There is a need for pre Apprenticeship training, which offers a genuine ladder to high skilled Apprenticeships.
- Employers and learners do not have access to good quality information

- Through the funding system it is the training providers that define training content rather than the employers who have the skill requirements.
- 2.2.3 Skills miss match – Further education and skills achievement
- Over supply in hair and beauty, hospitality and leisure, travel and tourism – these sectors have an oversupply in training.
 - Under supply in marketing, sales, supporting teaching and learning, security industry, fashion and textiles.
 - Colleges and learners to identify occupations with relatively low demand but high supply. Colleges continue to churn out courses that do not match the job demands of the market place.

2.3 Delivering Strategic Objective 3 of the Skills and Employment Plan, “Supporting young people to be employment-ready”

2.3.1 CSESG is delivering this objective by sharing information, joint working and promoting and supporting a number of employability related projects and initiatives. The following is a list of examples:

2.3.2 LBC and Croydon College Student Employability Programme

LBC will work with Croydon College in supporting students improve their employability skills. Plans are being prepared to set up a series of council employability initiatives for students and Croydon college staff this will include mock interviews, manager staff exchanges, commercial up skilling of college staff, live work place visits and possible placements. Student projects will benefit students' and college staff to raise awareness.

2.3.3 LBC Backr

A social network programme that creates career opportunities and momentum for people out of work placing them in networks and linking them to small business that will drive job creation
Timescale – July 2013 - July 2015

3.3.4 LBC “Getting young people back into work project “City Bridge Trust

To reduce numbers of young people not in employment, education and training in Croydon NEETs into jobs or apprenticeships over 2 years in partnership with Crystal Palace football club foundation and Croydon Voluntary Action

3.3.5 LBC E Passport- Work Credit Scheme

Development of a proposal for a digital employment passport developed to provide young people aged 14 to 30 with the opportunity to certify and capture informal and non-accredited work experience and/or work based learning through 'work credits E Passport – Work Credit Scheme

3.3.6 LBC Arrival Education Solutions

Supporting the delivery of a borough wide mentoring programme linking business mentors and students in danger of becoming NEETs.

LBC Family Resilience Team Employability Project

project aimed at long term workless families with multiple problems is twofold
a) to prepare long term unemployed parents for future employment b) at the

same time to prepare for future employment, any children in those households between the ages of 14-16 (key stage 4) who are at risk of becoming NEET.

3.3.7 Croydon Commitment Corporate Open Day

Croydon business members of CC to take part in an open corporate day for secondary school pupils Companies will host 100 pupils and give them the opportunity of experiencing the work environment and experience first-hand what it's like to work in a major organisation

3.3.8 Jobcentre Plus (JCP) Gangs

JCP has deployed a dedicated adviser to work in partnership with the probation service and YOS to help support those already in gangs or those in danger of becoming involved in gangs. The aim is to establish good links with probation services and forge relationships with various specialist providers in the area who work with disaffected youth.

3.3.9 JCP Outreach

JCP have deployed 3 additional lone parent advisers to work in the CALAT building in New Addington working with customers claiming income support and employment and support allowance. They have also a member of staff who works with the 18-24 probation hub on a weekly basis, giving advice and guidance to young offenders.

2.4 Indicators of success to monitor its effectiveness

2.4.1 The Skills and Employment Plan 2013-18 is backed up by annual Delivery Plans. The Delivery Plan for 2013- 2014 outlines the key steps that will be taken to deliver the objectives. It identifies the objective, the priority activity and the project to deliver the activity, the expected outcomes/benefits and the lead partner. This is a working document and each quarter a progress update is logged.

2.4.2 Typical outcomes include creation of more Apprenticeships, increased skills base, a decrease in the number of economically inactive residents, more young people starting a business, increase in the employability skills of young people, reduced number of NEETs, increased number of local labour opportunities, etc.

2.5 Apprenticeships

2.5.1 What are Apprenticeships?

An Apprenticeship is a real job with training so a person can earn while learning and achieve a recognised qualification. Apprenticeships take between one and four years to complete and cover 1,500 job roles, in a range of industries, from engineering to financial advice, veterinary nursing to accountancy. All Apprentices must receive the appropriate national minimum wage (£2.65 for under 19 year olds and first year apprentices, £4.68 for 19 and 20 year olds and £6.19 for those aged 21 and over).

2.5.2 Apprenticeships are available at Intermediate, Advanced and Higher (degree) level. After finishing, the majority of apprentices (85%) will stay in employment, with two-thirds (64%) staying with the same employer. A third (32%) of all former Apprentices had received a promotion within 12 months of finishing, and of those in work, three quarters (75%) reported taking on more responsibility in

their job. Employers think that qualified Apprentices are 15% more employable than those with other qualifications.

2.5.3 Apprenticeships in Croydon and barriers addressed Achievements

Croydon is performing well in creating Apprenticeships compared to other London boroughs. Apprenticeships starts (an individual becomes an Apprentice) and achievements (an individual completes an Apprenticeship) are summarised in the following table.

Croydon	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13
Starts	1,240	2,270	2,740	3,300
Achievements	700	930	1,150	1,600

Although final figures for 2012/13 are not due until the end of the year, it is predicted that Apprenticeship starts will reach 3,300 while achievements will reach 1,600.

2.5.4 Barriers

Apprenticeships as a career path are not given the deserved high profile in schools and SMEs are often put off by a lack of coherent consistent information. Over 90% of all businesses are SMEs, but the proportion of take up of Apprenticeships in SMEs is just under 10%. This is less than half that of larger companies. The main barriers to SMEs taking on an Apprentice are lack of awareness, insufficient empowerment and poor process.

2.6 Work experience

- 2.6.1 Evidence suggests that work experience during education can be a highly effective way to give young people a taste of the world of work or of particular jobs and to help them develop employability skills. The Confederation of British Industry has argued that **“it is hard to overstate the potential importance of work experience for young people’s future employability”**.
- 2.6.2 Research by DEMOS suggests that when work experience is of good quality it is the most disadvantaged young people that benefit the most.
- 2.6.3 Too often work experience placements are short, of poor quality with young people given little to do and the placement poorly linked to their wider education or the advice and guidance they receive. There is some evidence of a correlation between work experience placements being at the lower level and the low socio-economic status of the school.
- 2.6.4 In Croydon the biggest challenge has been to get participation of Croydon employer organisations in the CSESG to pursue this topic. In recent months there has been dialogue with the Croydon Chamber of Commerce, Croydon BID and Croydon Commitment to achieve this participation. All three organisations have now signed up for membership of the Group. Particular progress has been made with Croydon Commitment where officers from LBC ED and CFL met with members of Croydon Commitment to discuss partnership working on actions to improve the employment chances of young people. It is clear that there is appetite to address the issue of young people’s employability

with the planned corporate open day event. The Group's intention is to capitalise on this and plan a series of future events.

2.7 Pre-employment training

2.7.1 Pre-employment training courses are normally offered by the FE sector. These classes are specifically designed to enhance the skill levels of persons who are unemployed, underemployed and those facing an impending layoff.

2.7.2 The core curriculum focuses on the development of essential skills for the workplace. The courses on offer can include career planning and employability skills, basic keyboarding and computer applications. In addition candidates learn to set goals and explore careers. Resume writing, interviewing techniques, and job search skills are emphasised. Job placement and increased self-sufficiency is the ultimate goal of the programme.

2.7.3 The SESG recognises the benefits of pre-employment training and facilitates joint working between its members to increase this provision and offer it at the most appropriate locations.

2.8 Volunteering as a way to help young people acquire new transferrable skills and useful experience

2.8.1 Volunteering for young people offers many benefits. It widens participation and tackles social exclusion. It opens up a network of people and experiences. It is a tool for personal development and is a good way of developing a range of employability skills. Many employers ask for experience as well as qualifications and by volunteering people can broaden their experiences. Employers favour people who have become involved in volunteering. Volunteering shows commitment and employability skills.

2.8.2 The group is working with the partners from the voluntary sector to increase the volunteering opportunities and the range of employers prepared to offer them.

2.9 Links between local employers and schools

2.9.1 It is reported that too few young people are equipped with a good understanding of jobs available in the labour market or opportunities in further education. Secondary schools carry the responsibility of ensuring that pupils are sufficiently informed of the choices awaiting them when entering the world of work. One way of mitigating the gap in young people's knowledge of the world of work is to develop links with employers as young people prepare for the progression towards work.

2.9.2 Croydon's Capital South Education Business Partnership is the agency making the link between education and business, and is Croydon's recognised work experience broker. It supports students and employers through a range of programmes that offer young people the chance to learn for work, through work, and about work.

2.9.3 In addition there are other local and national initiatives that seek to meet the need. Take up by schools is reported to be patchy and depends on how much priority schools give to this approach. Employer engagement is part of the employability agenda and needs to be promoted in a wider context so that all schools make use of it.

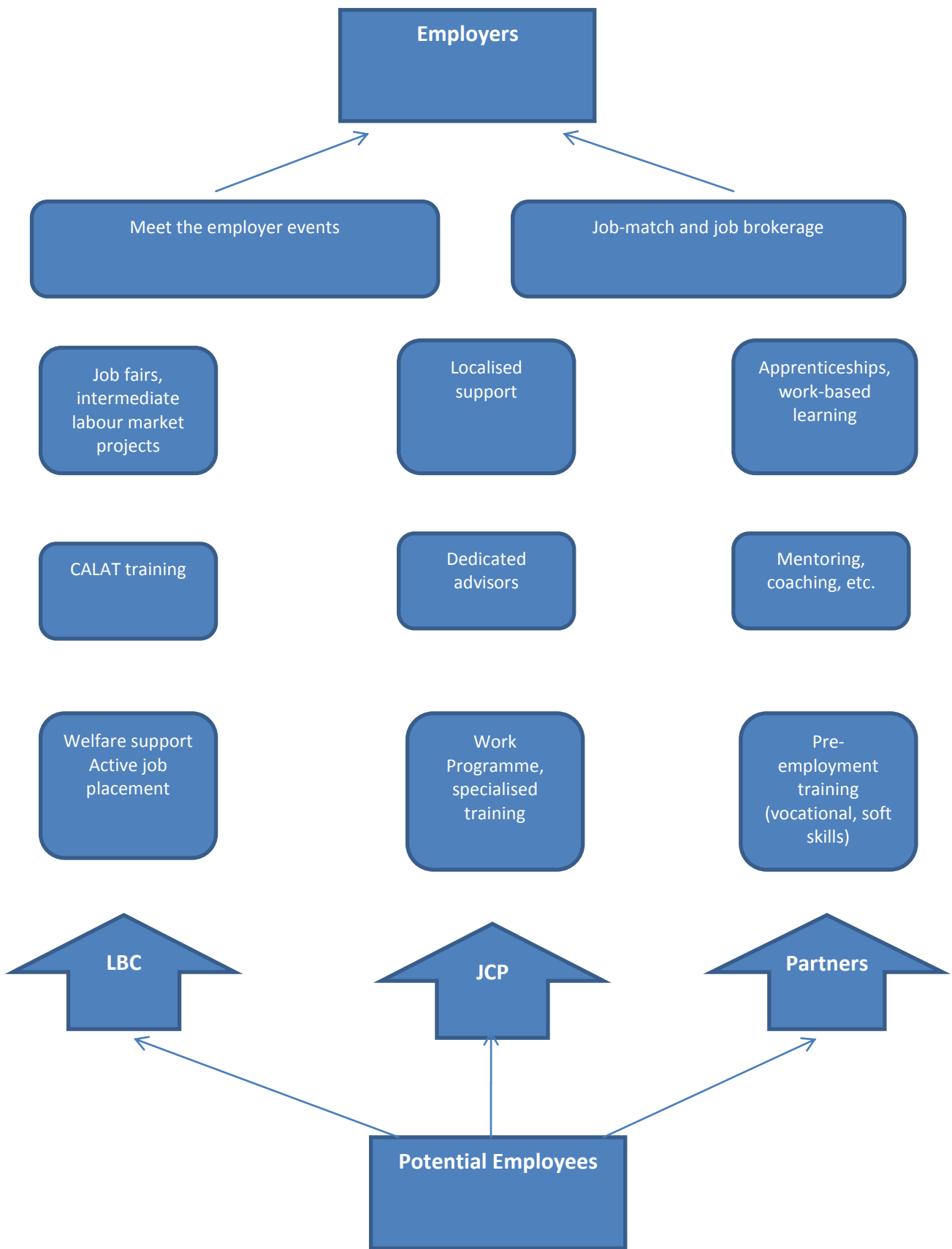
2.9.4 There are signs that employers are becoming aware that they should do more to support young people and the recent work of Croydon Commitment indicates this. Also with the approach of major developments in Croydon, e.g. Westfield the developers are conscious of the positive contribution that can be made by linking their schemes to the extra curricula school activities. They are also aware that this is an expectation of the Local Authority when considering planning applications or procurement.

2.9.5 The Group is playing a major role in agreeing skills and training outcomes to be delivered by forthcoming regeneration schemes applying a nationally recognised model to determine these benefits. The Group also uses the Social Value Toolkit to influence attitudes and provide local benefits to those most in need.

3. 'PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT'

3.1 At its meeting on 30 September 2013 the Council's Cabinet approved 'Pathways to employment', an innovative partnership approach designed to remove barriers to employment through a range of activities and projects aimed at both employers and local residents, particularly those who find it hard to secure a job. This approach endorsed the role of the Group in taking forward the skills and employment agenda across the borough including the important aspect of tackling unemployment among Croydon's young people.

3.2 The 'Pathways to employment' approach is outlined in the diagram on the next page



4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

Croydon is delivering a significant capital development programme over the next few years which will provide major employment and training opportunities for Croydon residents.

The planned Whittgift redevelopment, the largest known development in the town centre in the next 5 years, is expected to bring forward significant numbers of direct and indirect jobs. To deliver the highest proportion of these jobs to local residents a clear mechanism will be formed as part of the 'Pathways to employment' approach.

In negotiating the Section 106 Agreement, which defines the community benefits to be delivered as part of the scheme, the Council will target and develop the local workforce and local businesses so that they are able to access opportunities arising through the construction and operating phases of the redevelopment via the 'Pathways to employment' approach.

In the longer term the Croydon Council Urban Regeneration Vehicle (CCURV) Partnership programme has the potential for the commissioning of some major capital schemes in the future. CCURV is committed to delivering regeneration and social and economic benefits locally and this is reflected in the commission by CCURV of contracts with its construction supply chains.

The CCURV Skills and Employment Group made up of developers, key local and national employment, training, education and associated organisations was established by Croydon Council and John Laing because it was recognised that more could be achieved by supporting positive collaboration with developers than by leaving the supply chain to work autonomously.

The two initial CCURV projects, Bernard Wetherill House and the Waddon mixed use development, are now complete and have produced the following positive outcomes:

- Awarding supply chain contracts to Croydon businesses
- Recruitment of apprentices
- Placements of long-term unemployed local people who undertook an intensive two week work experience programme which led to sustainable employment with firms in the construction supply chain
- A series of lectures and work placement offers to Croydon College and schools
- Creation of a bespoke programme by the construction supply chain and Changing Paths to provide training and employment to local offenders leaving prison (this was designed as part of Croydon's response to supporting local communities after the civil unrest in 2011 and came about through a collaborative approach between Changing Paths, Jobcentre Plus and Croydon Council)
- A training and visitor centre provided by CCURV and sir Robert McAlpine adjacent to the Bernard Wetherill site, regularly used by community groups, schools and Croydon College.

The CCURV Skills and Employment Group model has been refined based on the experience of the first two capital schemes and as more CCURV

developments are commissioned it will be applied to achieve those socio economic benefits for Croydon. Discussions are in progress to transpose the strategy for leveraging socio-economic benefits developed with the CCURV to a wider portfolio of projects in Croydon as part of the 'Pathways to employment' approach.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The CSESG has been in existence for just over 18 months and has already established itself as the borough's lead partnership forum for leading the skills and employment agenda.
- 5.2 The Group recognises the importance of supporting young people to be employment ready and take advantage of the unprecedented regeneration coming to the borough.
- 5.3 The recently approved by Cabinet 'Pathways to employment' approach outlined above provides the Group with a solid platform to achieve its objectives in 2013-14 and beyond.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Appendix 1: CSESG membership

Appendix 2: Croydon Skills and Employment Plan 2013-18