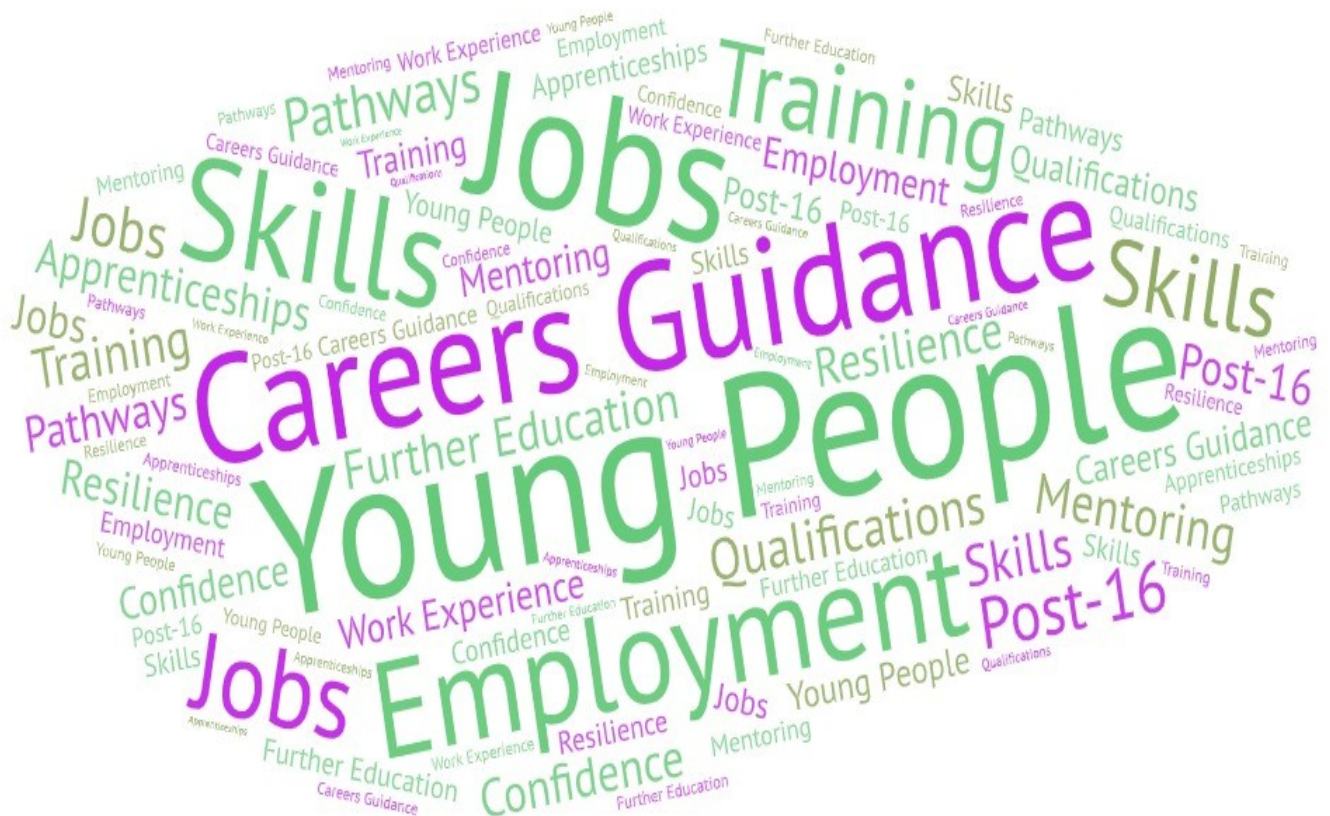




Something to Aim For

Scrutiny Inquiry Employment and Skills for Young People (April 2023)



A report from Overview & Scrutiny





Contents

Preface	3
Summary	5
Background	13
1.1 About Overview and Scrutiny	13
1.2 Membership of Task and Finish Group	13
1.3 Terms of Reference for the Inquiry	14
2 Youth Skills and Unemployment in Birmingham	15
2.1 Overview	15
2.2 What are the Skills and Employment Issues in Birmingham and How Does this Compare Regionally and Nationally?	17
2.3 Job Vacancy Data	22
2.4 Resident Employment	23
2.5 Skills Levels	23
2.6 Employment, Poverty and Cost of Living Crisis	24
3 Qualifications and Pathways	27
3.2 Educational Attainment in Birmingham	31
4 What Information, Advice and Services are Available to Help Young People in Birmingham Make Choices about their Future?	32
4.1 Evidence Gathering	32
4.2 Careers Advice in Schools and Further Education Providers	32
4.3 Further and Higher Education and Universities Careers Advice and Guidance and Employment Support	34
4.4 The Prince's Trust	36
4.5 Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations	37
4.6 Support for Care Experience Children and Young People	37
4.7 Birmingham City Council	39
4.8 Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership	45
4.9 Working with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)	47
5 Key Themes in the Evidence the Inquiry Received	49



5.1	Sources of Evidence	49
5.2	What Young People told the Inquiry	49
5.3	The Prince's Trust NatWest Youth Index	50
5.4	Responding to Needs of Children and Young People and Addressing Structural Inequities	54
5.5	Complexity and Fragmentation of the Skills and Employment Ecosystem	57
5.6	Skills Funding	59
5.7	Work Experience	60
5.8	Mentoring	60
5.9	Apprenticeships	61
6	Conclusions	62
7	Recommendations	65
<hr/>		
	Appendix 1: Breaking Down Barriers Report – Recommendations	72
	Appendix 2: Terms of Reference	78
	Appendix 3: Be Heard Consultation responses	81
	Appendix 4: List of Contributors	82
	Appendix 5: References	83

Further information regarding this report can be obtained from:

Lead Review Officer: **Fiona Bottrill**

tel: 07395 884487

e-mail: fiona.bottrill@birmingham.gov.uk

Reports that have been submitted to Council can be downloaded from www.birmingham.gov.uk/scrutiny.



Preface

By Councillor Saima Suleman

Chair, Economy & Skills Overview & Scrutiny Committee



As councillors we are based in the heart of our communities and understand first-hand the challenges that our residents are facing following the pandemic. One of the key challenges identified by this committee was the issue of youth unemployment and skills in the city. This Scrutiny Inquiry reflects the priority of the Council and organisations across Birmingham to address these issues.

We have used the Council's report 'Breaking Down Barriers' as the starting point for our Inquiry as this set out the employment challenges faced by young people following the pandemic. We focused on 5 key themes from this report and wanted to understand how existing opportunities are communicated to young people and how young people are supported to develop entrepreneurial skills.

Our city is well known for its industrial heritage, however the diverse range of employment opportunities and the skills that are required today are reflected in the coat of arms for Birmingham which included figures that represent both industry and art. It is by recognising the strengths and opportunities Birmingham has across a range of sectors and organisations working together to inspire young people to take and develop these, that we can build a skilled local work force that will continue to take this City forward.

In undertaking this work we recognised that this issue cannot be tackled by the Council alone and I want to thank all the organisations that contributed to the Inquiry. Through the evidence you presented we have been able to build a picture of the complex and fragmented employment and skills landscape at a local, regional and national level. During the inquiry I have asked myself - if professionals can find this difficult to understand and, as elected members undertaking this Inquiry, it took this detailed piece of work enable us to fit the pieces of this jigsaw together – how can we expect young people to navigate this system and reach their potential?

Another factor that has made this a challenging policy to consider is that, as we have been working to understand the national, regional, city council and local policy context, the discussions on the Trailblazer Devolution Deal have been taking place, the transition to new funding regimes including the UK Shares Prosperity Fund is being determined the Local Skills Improvement Plan that will set the regional strategic context is being developed. To make recommendations that are timely for these strategic developments, we have not been able to consider the full range of issues identified in the Inquiry Terms of Reference. These issues will be put forward for the Scrutiny Committee to consider as part of the work programme for 2023/24. Other issues that have been identified during the Inquiry but again, due to time constraints, we have not been able to consider in more detail include the underspend of the Apprenticeship Levy and the recent announcement that young people will be able to use the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) to search and apply for apprenticeships.

The recommendations we have made, if implemented, will provide a framework that will operate at two levels. At a strategic level, the City Council will work with local and regional organisations to use the data and insight to collaborate and map the strengths, needs and provision across the City and agree the



governance arrangement to co-ordinate the delivery of the agreed priorities. It will also enable all young people, including those with additional needs, to understand the opportunities that are available and how to take advantage of them. Young people and organisations across the city will have something to aim for and know how to get there.

Some of the issues that we have identified are outside the scope of the Council or local organisations to address. We have therefore identified 3 key issues that we ask the Council to communicate to relevant government departments.

I want to thank everyone who has contributed to this inquiry, especially all members of this committee who bring with them a wealth of experience and passion which has been invaluable to the work of this inquiry. I would also like to thank Scrutiny Officers who have been instrumental in getting all the work of this enquiry completed within the tight deadline we set at the beginning of this municipal year. Also, to all other council officers that have supported the work of this enquiry.

Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank the brave young people who met with us during the Inquiry. You showed us, through your openness in sharing the challenges you have faced and willingness to contribute to work that will improve the opportunities for all young people, that young people are our greatest asset for the future.

Councillor Saima Suleman

Chair, Economy & Skills Overview & Scrutiny Committee



Summary

The Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided to undertake an Inquiry into employment and skills for young people as part of the Scrutiny work planning process in July 2022. The Breaking Down Barriers¹ report that has been published by the Council during the pandemic highlighted the disproportionate impact on young people. The report showed that in February 2020, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, 6.3% of young people aged 18-24 in Birmingham and 6.1% in the West Midlands were unemployed. By March 2021, this had risen to 11.6% in Birmingham and 11.5% in the West Midlands – an increase of over 5%.

The Breaking Down Barriers report provided the strategic context for the Council to tackle youth unemployment and it was agreed that the Scrutiny Inquiry would contribute to this area of policy development. The over-arching question the Inquiry considered was:

How is the council responding to the Breaking Down Barriers Report and what is the vision for Life-Long Learning and Skills across the city?

The specific focus for the Inquiry would be on the implementation of 5 of the recommendations from the breaking down barriers report as set out below with the addition of 2 further issues of communication and marketing and entrepreneurship:

- Support young people to build confidence and resilience
- Develop a comprehensive city-wide mentoring scheme
- Facilitate accessible work experience opportunities
- Reshape careers advice and guidance services
- Deliver a locally designed scheme of employment support for young people and businesses

The Inquiry also considered:

- How marketing and communication strategies are used to inform disenfranchised young people of the skills and employment opportunities available.
- How young people are supported to develop entrepreneurial skills

The Task and Finish Group that was established to undertake this Inquiry recognised that many of the policy areas and services are outside the scope of the City Council. In gathering the evidence, the Inquiry reached out to other partner organisations in Birmingham and academics who have researched in this field and importantly also met with young people who shared their journeys and considered responses to an online survey.

The key themes that were identified from the evidence received were:

- Supporting Young People to Build Confidence and Resilience

¹ https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20143/young_people/2389/breaking_down_barriers_working_towards_birmingham_s_future_supporting_younger_people_into_employment



- Responding to Needs of Children and Young People and Addressing Structural Inequities
- Complexity and Fragmentation of the Skills and Employment Ecosystem
- Skills Funding
- Work Experience
- Mentoring
- Apprenticeships

The recommendations below were developed based on the evidence received.

	Recommendations	Responsibility	Completion Date
R01	<p>Fragmentation and Complexity of the System Council asks the Deputy Leader to work with partners, including the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Chamber of Commerce, Colleges, Universities, Unions, SMEs, sector-based organisations and Community and voluntary organisations to:</p> <p>a) Map skills strengths, needs (current and future) and provision across the Birmingham skills ecosystem and agree priorities.</p> <p>b) Ensure that the City Observatory works with the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce as the Employer Representative Body for the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) to make sure the plan draws on the mapping work and existing data for Birmingham that partners already hold.</p> <p>c) Agree the governance arrangements and infrastructure to support collaboration to co-ordinate the delivery of agreed priorities identified through the mapping / LSIP process.</p>	Deputy Leader	October 2023
R02	<p>Confidence and Resilience Young people need to understand the current and future skills and job opportunities in the City:</p> <p>a) In the short term, Council asks the Deputy Leader to take forward work with careers advice providers to ensure the Labour</p>	Deputy Leader	July 2023



	<p>Market Information (Labour Market Information - Birmingham Education Partnership (bep.education)) is updated and promoted as a key resource for careers advisors in schools and colleges.</p> <p>b) In the medium-term Council asks the Deputy Leader to take forward work with partners to use the information from the local mapping as set out in recommendation R01 to develop a website /online resource that are relevant to young people and should be maintained with up-to-date information. The Council should work with partners to explore other methods of communicating this information with young people including social media and marketing. Ideally this should be co-produced with young people.</p>		March 2024
R03	<p>Funding Building on the information provided to the Inquiry, Council asks the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families to work together with partners to map the funding gaps and projects in Birmingham relating to employment and skills that are at risk as a result of the transition to new funding regimes, including the 3 pillars of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up funds, and that the Council facilitates a collaborative approach with partners to achieve maximum benefit from the funds that will be available to Birmingham.</p>	<p>Deputy Leader</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families</p>	June 2023
R04	<p>Lobbying on Central Government on National Issues: Council asks that the Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families and the Chair of the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee write a joint letter to the Department for Education and Department for Work and Pensions to lobby on the following points:</p>	<p>Deputy Leader</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families</p> <p>Chair of the Economy and Skills Overview</p>	May 2023



<p>R06</p>	<p>Careers Service (BDB Rec 8) When reshaping the careers service Council asks the Deputy Leader and the Cabinet Member, Children, Young People and Families to work with partners to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Agree a strategic approach to the provision of pre 16 and post 16 careers advice, including the introduction of discussions with children at primary school about their aspirations and the wide range of jobs that are available in the City. b) Use the mapping of skills strengths, needs (current and future) and provision across the Birmingham skills ecosystem and agrees priorities to act as a catalyst to bring together schools, colleges, universities and employers to inspire young people to take the opportunities that are available in the City. c) Ensure young people are provided with information about a wide range of education, training including apprenticeships and careers to understand the options that are available to them (Linked to R0 2) d) Young people receive support that considers their personal circumstances and aspirations. Young people who have additional vulnerabilities and needs including SEND should receive 1-1 support, including during transition stages. The council should explore how other professionals who have existing supportive relationships with young people with additional needs can be trained to provide initial careers support and sign posting. 	<p>Deputy Leader</p> <p>Cabinet Member, Children, Young People and Families</p>	<p>October 2023</p>
<p>R07</p>	<p>Young People with Additional Vulnerabilities Council asks the Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities to work with the Cabinet Member for Finance and</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community</p>	<p>June 2023</p>



	<p>Resources and the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families to pass a political commitment to treat care experience as a protected characteristic, to ensure that this group receive the support, guidance and opportunities that enable them to succeed. Cabinet Members are also asked to ensure that, building on good practice that is in place, young people with SEND also receive appropriate support and guidance as set out below. In order to implement these recommendations, it is proposed that Council asks the relevant Cabinet Members to undertake an assessment of the resources required to implement the following:</p> <p>a) The Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families review and develop new Council processes and procedures to guarantee interviews for young people with care experience and / or SEND who meet the criteria for jobs. This should include the development of monitoring and evaluation to track the impact of these new policies and procedures.</p> <p>b) The Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities and Cabinet Member Children, Young People and Families ensure that the right support and guidance is in place to enable young people with additional vulnerabilities to succeed in the Council, including young people with care experience and/or SEND. This should include monitoring and evaluation processes, including exit interviews to track impact. Once developed, the policies and procedures should be shared with organisations on the City Board to encourage partners to adopt this good practice.</p>	<p>Safety and Equalities</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources</p> <p>Cabinet Member Children, Young People and Families</p>	<p>October 2024</p> <p>October 2024</p>
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	<p>c) The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources explores opportunities with council contractors to include guaranteed interviews for care-experienced young people at entry/apprentice level roles and ringfence opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and work opportunities for care-experienced young people.</p> <p>d) The Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities works with the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families to support the development of BCT's 'Develop Me' Mentoring programme, ensuring that our children in care and care-experienced young people have mentors from the Council who can support and guide their development in areas like transitions, education and employment.</p>		<p>October 2024</p> <p>October 2024</p>
R08	<p>Mentoring (BDB Rec 1, Rec 4) Council asks the Deputy Leader to work with partners to secure funding for a mentoring programme that provides a range of opportunities that are flexible and meet young people's needs including formal mentoring and developing the role of trusted adults who will support and encourage young people as they navigate their education, training and work. The mentoring programme should:</p> <p>a) Be targeted at young people who experience disadvantage and focus on young people on pupil premium, young people with SEND and care experienced young people.</p> <p>b) Ensure that mentors / trusted adults reflect the diversity of the City and include people with lived experience of overcoming challenges in their careers.</p>	Deputy Leader	October 2023



	<p>c) Ensure that funding for programmes for work experience and mentoring programmes include in the budget travel costs for young people who would otherwise struggle to participate.</p>		
R09	<p>Apprenticeships Council asks the Deputy Leader to work with the Birmingham Ladder, Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts, Small Business Federation, other business organisations and education providers, to:</p> <p>a) Promote apprenticeships to small and medium enterprises, including providing information about how apprenticeships work and the benefits to businesses of employing apprentices and young people.</p> <p>b) Signpost small and medium enterprises to sources of administrative and business support, to enable apprenticeship schemes to be high quality and that apprentices receive the ongoing wraparound and tailored support they need to succeed.</p>	Deputy Leader	October 2023
R10	<p>Employment Support (BDB Rec 10) Council asks the Deputy Leader to build on existing good practice across the city and work with local organisations, Job Centres, Community centres, youth centres, libraries and employment support projects to develop Local Employment Partnerships to engage with small and medium size enterprises and match job seekers and those seeking apprenticeships to local employment opportunities. This should be linked in with the Council's early intervention and prevention programme, recognising the role of employment as a wider determinant of health, mental wellbeing, financial resilience and life chances.</p>	Deputy Leader	October 2023
R011	<p>Tracking Council agrees that the Executive Member reports on progress towards achievement of these recommendations no later than October 2023. Subsequent progress reports will be scheduled by the Committee thereafter, until all recommendations are implemented.</p>	Deputy Leader	October 2023



Background

1.1 About Overview and Scrutiny

- 1.1.1 Overview and Scrutiny is an essential part of the governance arrangements within the City Council and fulfils the statutory function as set out in the Local Government Act 2000 as amended by the Localism Act 2011. The vision for Scrutiny at Birmingham City Council, as set out in the Scrutiny Framework, is:
- 1.1.2 To ensure effective democratic accountability and oversight of the Council's executive. This will be achieved by a member-led Scrutiny function which is held in high regard by its many stakeholders, and which adds value for the people of Birmingham. This vision recognises that Scrutiny is a core component of the governance structures of the Council, and that Scrutiny Members, the Executive and senior officers will all work to create the right culture and lead the way in making the vision a reality. Ensuring good Scrutiny in Birmingham is a common endeavour across the council.
- 1.1.3 To achieve this Scrutiny will follow the nationally agreed 'Four Principles of Good Scrutiny':
- Amplify public voice and concerns;
 - Drive improvement in public services;
 - Provide constructive "critical friend" challenge;
 - Be led by 'independent minded people' who take responsibility for their role.
- 1.1.4 The Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee is one of 8 Overview and Scrutiny Committees that scrutinises and contributes towards policy development on the issues identified by councillors. The Scrutiny Committees cannot make police decisions but can make recommendations to the Council's Executive. The Scrutiny Inquiry reports are presented to City Council for all elected members to consider the recommendations.

1.2 Membership of Task and Finish Group

- 1.2.1 The Employment and Skills Inquiry was agreed as part of the Scrutiny Work Programme in July 2022 to be led by the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A Task and Finish Group was established with the following membership:
- 1.2.2 Cllr. Saima Suleman (Chair), Cllr. Simon Morrall (Deputy Chair) Cllr. Raqeeb Aziz, Cllr. Nicky Brennan and Cllr. Izzy Knowles



1.3 Terms of Reference for the Inquiry

1.3.1 The terms of reference were agreed by the Task and Finish Group in September 2022 and approved by the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2022. It was agreed that the Inquiry would focus on skills and employment for young people and build on the work undertaken through the Breaking Down Barriers report ([Breaking down barriers: working towards Birmingham's future supporting younger people into employment | Birmingham City Council](#))

1.3.2 The following key question for the Inquiry was agreed:

- How is the council responding to the Breaking Down Barriers Report and what is the vision for Life-Long Learning and Skills across the city?

1.3.3 Key lines of Inquiry:

- Support young people to build confidence and resilience
- Develop a comprehensive city-wide mentoring scheme
- Facilitate accessible work experience opportunities
- Reshape careers advice and guidance services
- Deliver a locally designed scheme of employment support for young people and businesses
- How marketing and communication strategies are used to inform disenfranchised young people of the skills and employment opportunities available
- How young people are supported to develop entrepreneurial skills

1.3.4 The full terms of reference are attached as Appendix 1.



2 Youth Skills and Unemployment in Birmingham

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 Birmingham has a persistently high unemployment rate and low skills which affects the opportunities for residents and the ability to grow the local economy and attract business to the city.

2.1.2 In February 2020, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, 6.3% of young people aged 18-24 in Birmingham and 6.1% in the West Midlands were unemployed. By March 2021, this had risen to 11.6% in Birmingham and 11.5% in the West Midlands – an increase of over 5%. When economically inactive young people, who are not currently seeking employment e.g., students are removed from the figures youth unemployment in the city rose to approximately 20% as of April 2021. Almost one in five young people in Birmingham are now out of work - substantially greater than the current UK average of 13.5% for 18 to 24 youth unemployment. (Breaking Down Barriers²)

2.1.3 The strategic importance of addressing youth skills and unemployment is reflected in the Grand Challenges facing the city and City Council's Corporate Plan priorities:

2.1.4 Grand Challenges:

- Unemployment, skills and the economy
- Health and well being
- Community cohesion and living standards
- The climate emergency
- Opportunities for children and young people

2.1.5 The Corporate Plan 2022 – 2026 strategic outcomes and priorities³:

- A Bold Prosperous Birmingham
 - Support inclusive economic growth
 - Tackle unemployment
 - Attract inward investment and infrastructure

² [Breaking down barriers: working towards Birmingham's future supporting younger people into employment | Birmingham City Council](#)

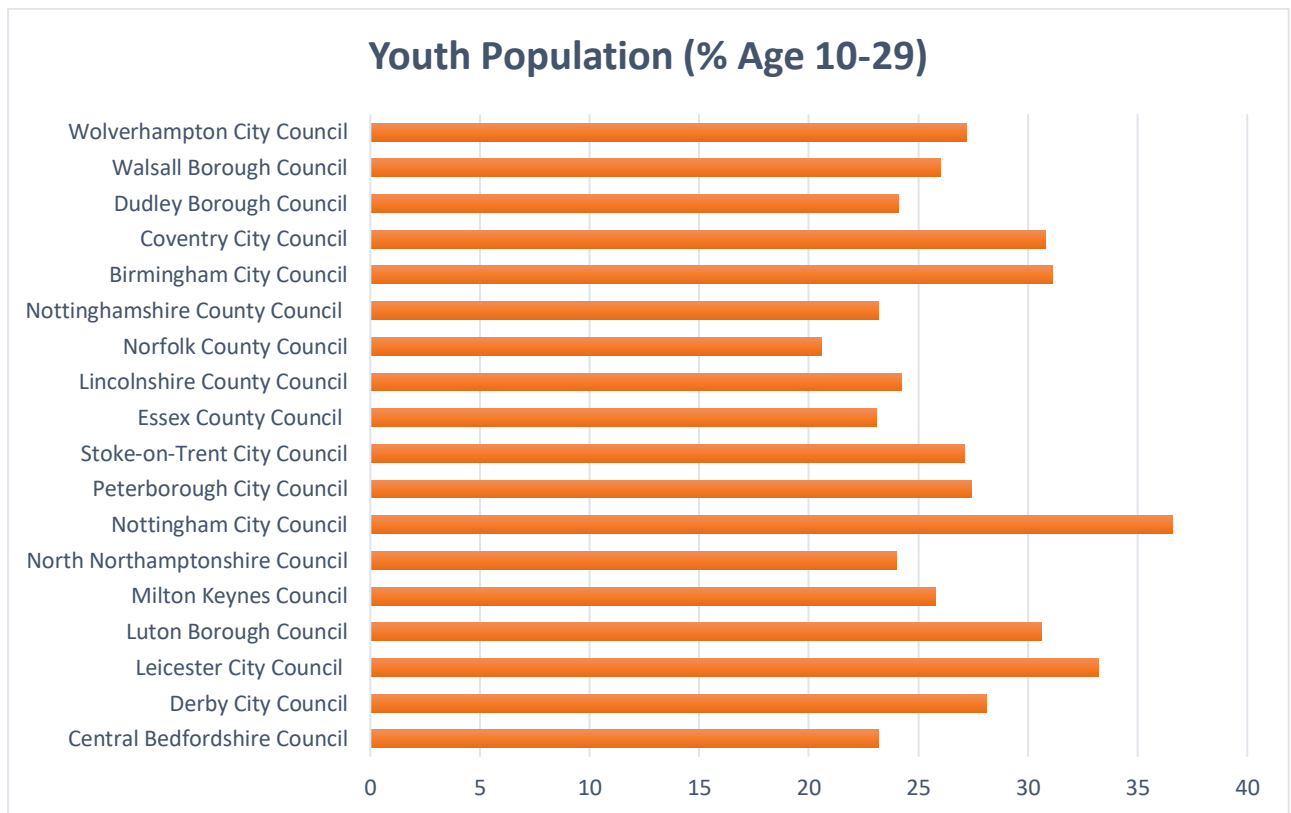
³ [Council Plan and Budget | Birmingham City Council](#)



- Maximise the benefits of the Commonwealth Games
- A Bold Inclusive Birmingham
 - Tackle poverty and inequality
 - Empower citizens and enable the citizen voice
 - Promote and champion diversity, civic pride and culture
 - Support and enable all children and young people to thrive
- A Bold Safe Birmingham
 - Make the city safer
 - Protect and safeguard vulnerable citizens
 - Increase affordable, safe, green housing
 - Tackle homelessness
- A Bold Healthy Birmingham
 - Tackle health inequalities
 - Encourage and enable physical activity and healthy living
 - Champion mental health
 - Improve outcomes for adults with disabilities and older people
- A Bold Green Birmingham
 - Improve street cleanliness
 - Improve air quality
 - Continue on the Route to Net Zero
 - Be a City of Nature

2.1.6 Birmingham is a young city and information reported to the Inquiry showed that in Birmingham over 30% of the population is aged 10 – 29. This makes it even more important to ensure that young people are accessing education and training opportunities and understand what the current and future job opportunities are in the city.

Graph 1: Percentage of Population Aged Between 10 – 29 in Cities in the 20% Most Deprived Index of Multiple Deprivation Areas and Index of Multiple Deprivation Top 30% Local Authorities that have Districts with Considerable Deprivation



(From Princes Trust Presentation to Economy and Skills OSC 7 December 2022: [CMIS > Meetings](#))

2.2 What are the Skills and Employment Issues in Birmingham and How Does this Compare Regionally and Nationally?

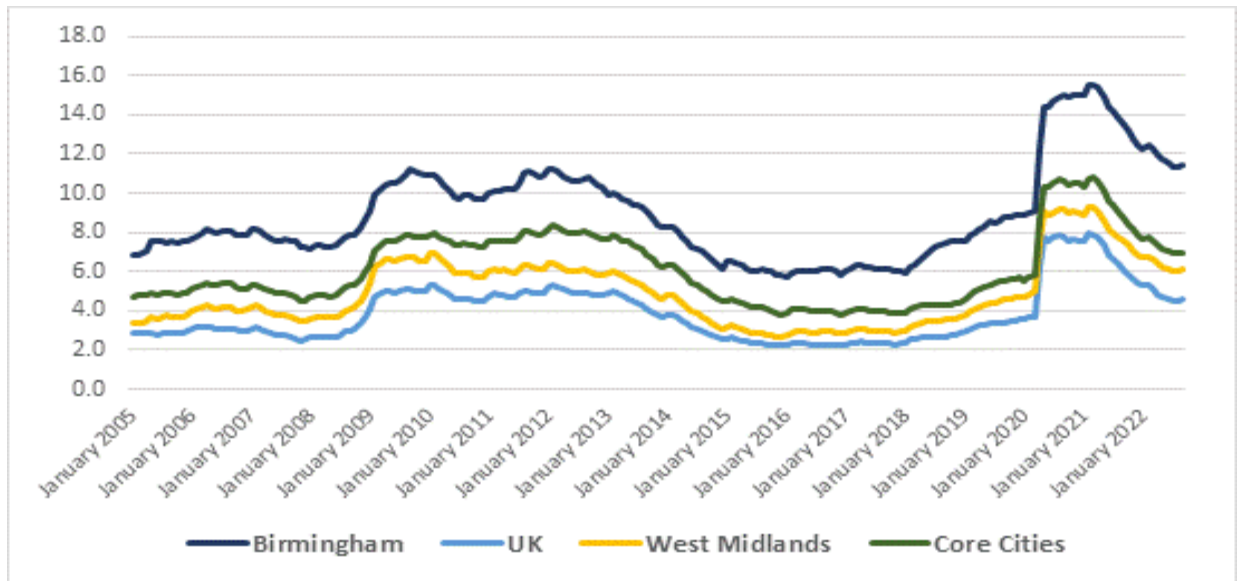
2.2.1 The Inquiry received the information below at the October 2022 meeting of the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- In September 2022, unadjusted unemployment claimant count numbers in the city increased by 665 to 61,665. The unadjusted claimant rate (% of the economically active population) increased slightly to 11.4%, with the claimant proportion (% of the whole working age population) also increasing to stand at 8.4%. Claimant numbers also increased nationally and in the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) area (3 LEP area) last month.
- In Birmingham, the unadjusted youth (18-24) claimant count increased by 210 in September 2022 to 10,700. The unadjusted youth unemployment rate increased to 14.1%, with the youth claimant proportion also increasing to 7.7%. Unadjusted youth unemployment rates also increased in the WMCA (9.6%) and for the UK as a whole (6.8%).



2.2.2 Graph 2 below shows Birmingham has a consistently higher claimant count rate for people aged 16-64 compared to the West Midlands, Core Cities and UK between 2005 – 2022.

Graph 2: Claimant Count Rate (16-64) Time Series 2005 – 2022



(From Skills Finding and Data Report to Economy and Skills OSC 9 November 2022: [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com/Document.ashx))

2.2.3 Table 1 below shows the unadjusted claimant count unemployment data for September 2022 for the core cities. Birmingham has the highest claimant unemployment rate (11.4%) amongst the core cities and is well above the UK average (4.6%). Eight of the ten core cities saw an increase in claimant count unemployment last month.

Table 1: Core City Claimant Count September 2022				
Area	Number	Rate %	Monthly Change	
			Number	Rate %
Birmingham	61,665	11.4	665	0.1
Manchester	22,980	7.6	100	0.0
Nottingham	12,050	7.0	90	0.1
Liverpool	18,445	6.9	-280	-0.1
Glasgow	21,695	6.7	-30	0.0
Newcastle	9,185	6.0	100	0.1
Leeds	22,730	5.6	350	0.1
Sheffield	15,180	4.9	60	0.1
Cardiff	9,535	4.7	130	0.0
Bristol	10,875	4.1	235	0.1
UK	1,533,175	4.6	13,140	0.1



London	287,600	5.7	8,030	0.2
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(From Skills Finding and Data Report to Economy and Skills OSC 9 November 2022:

[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com)

2.2.4 Birmingham Wards

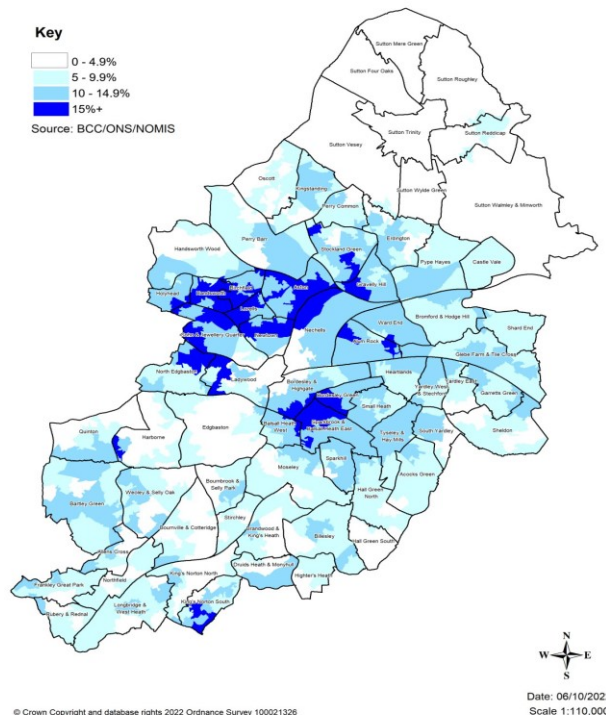
2.2.5 Tables containing ward claimant count unemployment data and ward youth unemployment data are shown below. Table 2 shows that Handsworth (15.8%) and Birchfield (15.7%) have the highest claimant proportions. The Sutton wards (Sutton Reddicap aside) have the lowest claimant proportions, all 3% or under.

2.2.6 Forty-five of the 69 wards in the city saw unemployment increase during September 2022. The largest increase in total claimant numbers at a ward level occurred in Newtown and Glebe Farm & Tile Cross (both +55).

2.2.7 Map 1 below shows that the highest levels of claimant unemployment are concentrated in the inner city and in areas to the north-west of the city centre.

2.2.8 In terms of ward youth unemployment Handsworth (14.5%) and Aston (14.2%) have the highest youth claimant proportions. Thirty-three of the city's wards saw youth claimant numbers increase in September 2022.

Map 1 Birmingham Claimant Count Unemployment Proportions August 2022



(From Skills Finding and Data Report to Economy and Skills OSC 9 November 2022:

[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com)



Table - 2 Unadjusted 18-24 Claimant Count Unemployment by Ward September 2022

Ward	18-24 Claimant Unemployed		Monthly Change	
	Number	Claimant Proportion %	Number	Claimant Proportion %
Acocks Green	215	9.1	-10	-0.4
Allens Cross	110	11.8	0	0.0
Alum Rock	420	12.3	5	0.1
Aston	405	14.2	20	0.7
Balsall Heath West	130	6.9	5	0.3
Bartley Green	230	10.7	10	0.5
Billesley	185	10.9	0	0.0
Birchfield	205	13.2	15	1.0
Bordesley & Highgate	210	8.0	0	0.0
Bordesley Green	180	11.8	-5	-0.3
Bournbrook & Selly Park	145	0.9	0	0.0
Bournville & Cotteridge	100	5.7	-10	-0.6
Brandwood & King's Heath	125	8.5	0	0.0
Bromford & Hodge Hill	225	9.3	0	0.0
Castle Vale	110	12.1	5	0.5
Druids Heath & Monyhull	115	11.4	5	0.5
Edgbaston	70	1.0	5	0.1
Erdington	165	10.3	-10	-0.6
Frankley Great Park	135	13.5	0	0.0
Garretts Green	120	11.1	5	0.5
Glebe Farm & Tile Cross	275	12.8	20	0.9
Gravelly Hill	140	11.4	10	0.8
Hall Green North	180	7.5	0	0.0
Hall Green South	40	5.0	0	0.0
Handsworth	200	14.5	-5	-0.4
Handsworth Wood	180	8.2	5	0.2
Harborne	150	5.8	15	0.6
Heartlands	170	10.5	15	0.9
Highter's Heath	75	9.2	10	1.2
Holyhead	160	11.7	0	0.0
King's Norton North	65	7.0	-10	-1.1
King's Norton South	100	10.7	15	1.6



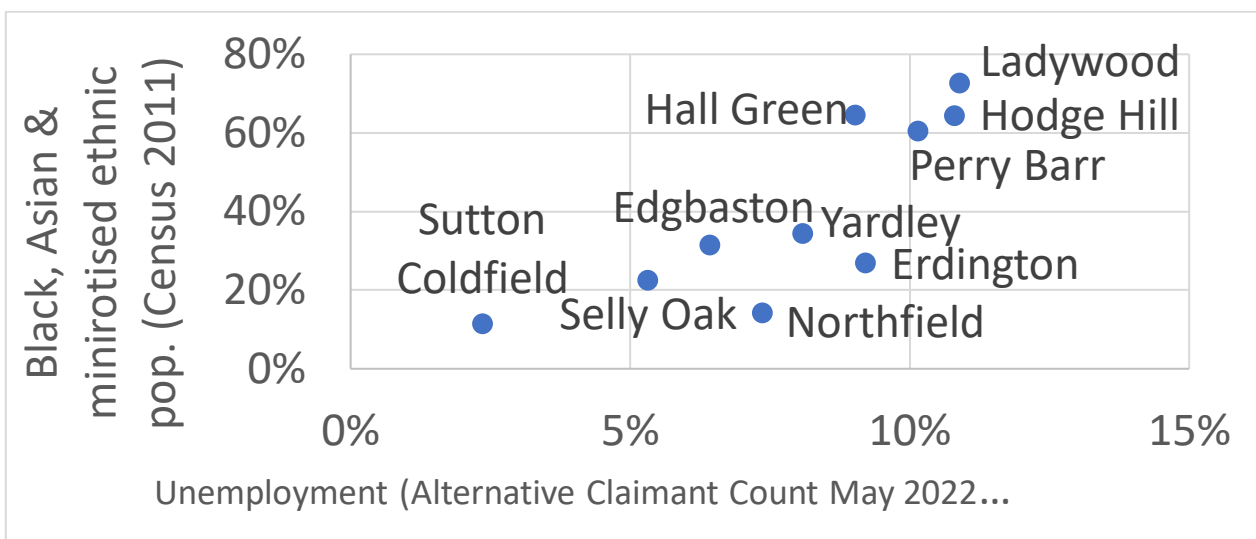
Kingstanding	230	11.4	-5	-0.2
Ladywood	230	3.7	0	0.0
Longbridge & West Heath	165	10.1	15	0.9
Lozells	145	11.4	0	0.0
Moseley	140	7.4	10	0.5
Nechells	165	3.3	-5	-0.1
Newtown	240	6.7	10	0.3
North Edgbaston	325	9.8	15	0.5
Northfield	70	8.9	5	0.6
Oscott	130	8.1	0	0.0
Perry Barr	165	8.3	20	1.0
Perry Common	105	10.5	5	0.5
Pype Hayes	90	11.1	5	0.6
Quinton	135	8.0	5	0.3
Rubery & Rednal	85	9.4	0	0.0
Shard End	115	12.2	5	0.5
Sheldon	130	8.1	-5	-0.3
Small Heath	235	8.8	-5	-0.2
Soho & Jewellery Quarter	320	8.3	-10	-0.3
South Yardley	75	8.9	0	0.0
Sparkbrook & Balsall Heath East	410	13.1	10	0.3
Sparkhill	270	9.8	5	0.2
Stirchley	65	8.4	0	0.0
Stockland Green	315	13.7	10	0.4
Sutton Four Oaks	10	1.7	0	0.0
Sutton Mere Green	15	2.4	5	0.8
Sutton Reddicap	55	7.1	0	0.0
Sutton Roughley	30	4.0	0	0.0
Sutton Trinity	15	3.0	0	0.0
Sutton Vesey	45	2.9	5	0.3
Sutton Walmley & Minworth	30	2.9	0	0.0
Sutton Wylde Green	20	3.4	0	0.0
Tyseley & Hay Mills	150	12.2	5	0.4
Ward End	175	10.4	0	0.0
Weoley & Selly Oak	215	7.8	5	0.2
Yardley East	85	9.1	0	0.0
Yardley West & Stechford	160	12.3	-5	-0.4
Birmingham	10,700	7.7	210	0.2



(From Skills Finding and Data Report to Economy and Skills OSC 9 November 2022:
[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#))

2.2.9 Graph 3 below shows that the wards with the highest unemployment are the wards with the largest Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic populations.

Graph 3: Ward Ethnicity and Unemployment

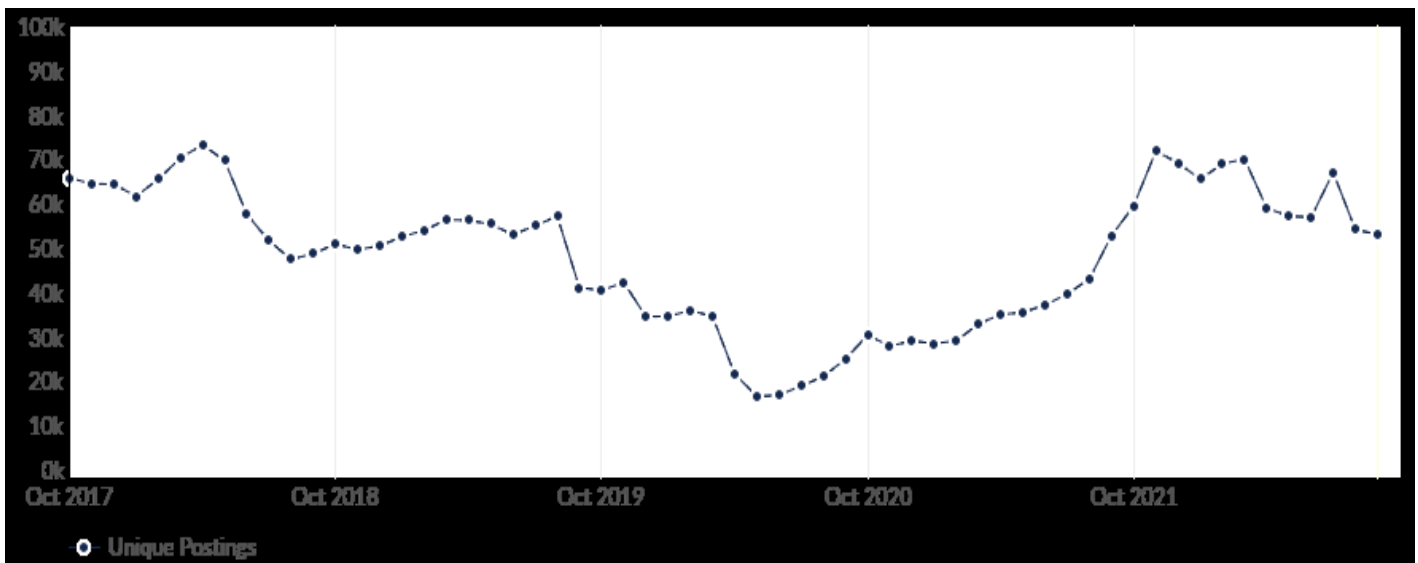


(From Cabinet Member Report to Economy and Skills OSC 9 November 2022:
[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#))

2.3 Job Vacancy Data

2.3.1 The job postings data from Lightcast in Graph 4 below showed that in September 2022 there were 52,958 jobs being advertised in Birmingham. This is a 1,041 decrease on the number of vacancies recorded in August 2022.

Graph 4: Vacancy Time Series 2017 - 2022



(From Skills Finding and Data Report to Economy and Skills OSC 9 November 2022: [Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#))

2.4 Resident Employment

- 2.4.1 The Annual Population Survey employment data for Birmingham (Q2 2022) shows working age employment levels decreasing by 7,400 during September 2022 to stand at 481,500. The employment rate also decreased, down from 66.2% in Q1 2022 to 65.1% in Q2 2022. Economic inactivity (those not in work or seeking work) in the city stood at 217,900 in Q2, 29.5% of the 16-64 population.
- 2.4.2 The Labour Force Survey figures for the West Midlands region for the three-month period June to August 2022 show that the number of working age people employed has decreased by 11,000 compared with the previous quarter (Mar to May 2022). The employment rate regionally fell by 0.5% points compared to the previous quarter. Nationally the employment rate fell to 75.5%, down by 0.3% points on the previous quarter and still 1.0% point below pre pandemic levels.

2.5 Skills Levels

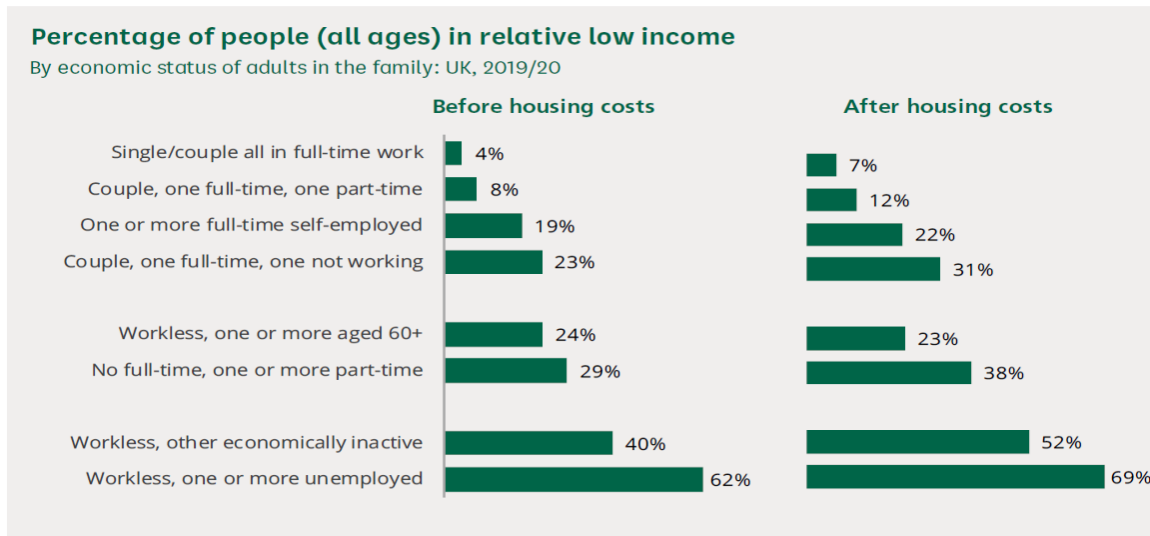
- 2.5.1 It was highlighted that Birmingham experiences an 'employment paradox'. On the supply side comparatively high unemployment and low employment rates in the city are linked to the skills gap that exists locally with residents having lower skills and qualification levels than the national average. Graph 5 below highlights this issue, showing how Birmingham (10.8%) has a greater proportion of working age residents with no qualifications compared to the UK (6.7%) and the core city average



(From Cabinet Member Report to Economy and Skills OSC 9 November 2022:
[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com))

2.6.2 Graph 7 below illustrates that lack of employment is the most important factor driving poverty and cost of living pressures nationally.

Graph 7: Percentage of People (All Ages) In Relative Low Income 2019/20

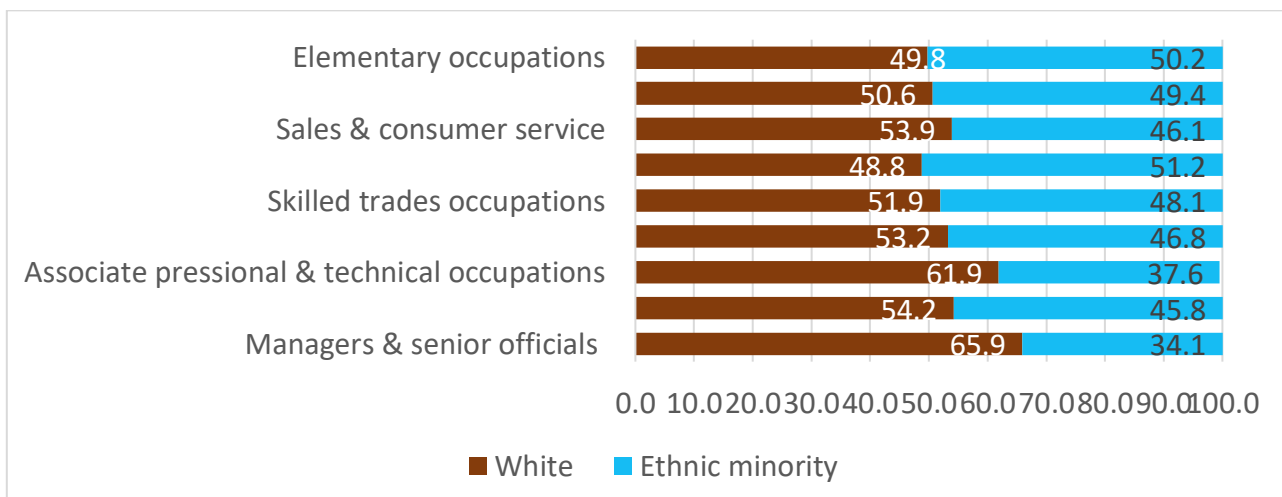


Source: DWP, [Households Below Average Income](#), 2019/20

(From Cabinet Member Report to Economy and Skills OSC 9 November 2022:
[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](https://cmis.uk.com))

2.6.3 Graph 8 below shows that white people are particularly strongly represented in managerial and senior official roles in Birmingham. At 65.9%, managers and senior officials was the occupation with the highest level of White representation, and the lowest share of ethnic minority representation, followed by associate professional and technical occupation.

Graph 8: Percentage of 16+ Employed by Occupation of Employment July 2021 to June 2022





(From Cabinet Member Report to Economy and Skills OSC 9 November 2022:[Document.ashx](#)
[\(cmis.uk.com\)](#))



3 Qualifications and Pathways

3.1.1 There are 8 qualification levels, and most qualifications have a difficulty level. The higher the qualification, the more difficult the qualification is to achieve. The Tables 3, 4, 5 and 6 below illustrate the qualifications and pathways young people can consider.

Table 3: Qualification Level

	Academic	Vocational	Work-based Learning
Entry levels 1- 3			
1	GCSE	BTEC	Traineeship / NVQ Level 1
2	GCSE	BTEC	Intermediate Apprenticeship / NVQ Level 2
3	A Level	BTEC / T Levels	Advanced Apprenticeship / NVQ Level 3
4	Honours Degree (Year 1)	Higher National Certificate (HNC) /BTEC Higher	Higher Apprenticeship / NVQ Level 4
5	Honours Degree (Year 2)	Higher National Diploma (HND) / BTEC Higher	Degree Apprenticeship / NVQ Level 5
6	Honours Degree (Year 3)	BTEC Professional	Degree Apprenticeship / NVQ Level 6
7	Master's degree	BTEC Professional	Degree Apprenticeship / NVQ Level 7
8	Doctorate (PHD)	BTEC Professional	NVQ Level 8

(From My Way Into the World of Work: [Labour Market Information - Birmingham Education Partnership \(bep.education\)](https://www.bep.education))



Table 4: GCSE Grades Comparison Table

Current GCSE Grades	GCSE Fine Grades	GCSE 9-1 Grades	BTEC Grades
A*	A*+	9	D*
	A* A*-	8	
A	A+	7	D
	A		
	A-		
B	B+	6	M
	B B-		
C	C+	5	P
	C		
	C-		
D	D+	4	
	D		
	D-		
E	E+	3	
	E		
	E-		
F	F+	2	
	F		
	F-		
G	G+	1	L1
	G		
	G-		
U	U	0	U

(From My Way Into the World of Work: [Labour Market Information - Birmingham Education Partnership \(bep.education\)](http://bep.education))



Qualifications and Pathways: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

3.1.2 For young people with SEND, there are two potential pathways for those typically unlikely to take GCSE (Career Group 1) and those typically likely to take GCSE (Career Group 2)

Table 5: Career SEND Group 1 age 16+

Pathway	Description	Length of Time	Assessment	Level of Study	Entry Requirments	Work Experience	What does it lead to
Supported/Inclusive Apprenticeships	A real job with training & a salary	12-24 months		Entry 3 to Level 2	EHCP	Yes	Paid employment
Pre-Apprenticeships	A programme of study aimed at exploring different industries and job roles	Approx 6-12 weeks. Dependant on the provider		Entry Level training	Up to the training provider/employer	Yes, invaluable experience	Traineeship
Technical/ Vocational (BTECS)	Qualifications that teach you how to do tasks specifically related to the industry and role you want to be in	Dependent on vocational qualification	Course dependent. (Coursework, practical assessments and exams)	1+ (Entry Level to Level 8). Eg. Level 1 BTEC Certificate/Diploma or OCR City and Guilds	Course dependent. (Coursework and exams)	Course dependent	Apprenticeship, University or College, Employment
Supported Internships	A structured study programme/ partnership based predominantly with an employer	1 year	Varies between employer and/ or college	Entry Level and upwards	EHCP	Yes	Apprenticeship, Supportive Employment
Traineeships	A structured study programme/ partnership based predominantly with an employer	6 weeks - 6 months	A formal job or exit interview with written feedback. Coursework and exams are course dependent	N/A	Have little to no work experience and qualifies below Level 3	Yes	Apprenticeship, Supportive Employment
Supported Enterprise	Setting up your own business as either a freelance service, a sole trader or a registered company	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Recommended before setting up your own business	Self employment
Supported Employment	Personalised model with employer	Indefinite	On the job training and coaching	Dependent on employer	Dependent on employer	Yes	Paid employment
Volunteering	Working in the community or with a charity as a regular volunteer	Indefinite	N/A	N/A	Interview to assess interests, availability, adjustments to be made	Helps to do this in school so you can learn what is expected and what sort of role you would like to do	Could lead to paid work but not guaranteed. Could open up other opportunities.
Pre-supported Internships/Supported Work Experience	Regular placement with an employer over an extended period of time	Determined by employer and young person	N/A	N/A	EHCP/Vocational Profiling	N/A	Supported internship, college course, traineeship/supported apprenticeship

(From My Way Into the World of Work: [Labour Market Information - Birmingham Education Partnership \(bep.education\)](https://www.bep.education/))



Table 6: Career SEND Group 2 Age 16+

Pathway	Description	Length of Time	Assessment	Level of Study	Award UCAS Points	Entry Requirements	Work Experience	What does it lead to
Apprenticeships	A real job with training & a salary	1 year minimum	Apprenticeship dependent (includes demonstrations, presentations, course work and exams)	2/3 with possibility to progress to higher and degree apprenticeships	No	Employer dependent. Age 16+ Evidence of interest and ability to complete	Yes (paid job with at least 20% off the job training)	Higher or degree apprenticeship, University or College, Employment
A Levels	An academic qualification similar in style to GCSEs that prepares you for further study	2 years	Mostly exams at the end of the course	3	Yes	For individual schools and colleges to decide (commonly 5 GCSEs at grade 4 and above)	No	Apprenticeship, University or College, Employment
T Levels	A technical study programme similar to 3 A levels, with an industry placement which takes up 20% of the course. Designed to give you the skills that employers need	2 years	Exams, projects and practical assignments	3	Yes	Set by each school/college	Yes (80% classroom, 20% work)	Apprenticeship, University or College, Employment
Technical/ Vocational	Qualifications that teach you how to do tasks specifically related to the industry and role you want to be in	Course dependent	Course dependent (course work and exams)	1+	Yes	Course dependent (coursework and exams)	Course dependent	Apprenticeship, University or College, Work
Applied	Qualifications that prepare you for further study by combining academic learning with practical skills to give you a broad overview of working in a sector	Course dependent	Course dependent (course work and exams)	3	Some. (Course and award organisation dependent)	Set by each school/college	Course dependent	Apprenticeship, University or College, Employment
Traineeships	A work focussed study programme that prepares you for an apprenticeship or work	6 weeks - 6 months	A formal job or exit interview with written feedback. Coursework and exams are course dependent	N/A	Yes	Have little to no work experience and qualifies below level 3	Yes	Apprenticeship, Employment
Entrepreneurship	Setting up your own business as either a freelance service, a sole trader or a registered company	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	Industry dependent	Recommended before setting up your own business	Self employment
Paid Employment	Working 16 hours or more weekly with a contract in place	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	Industry dependent	Recommended before working	Employment

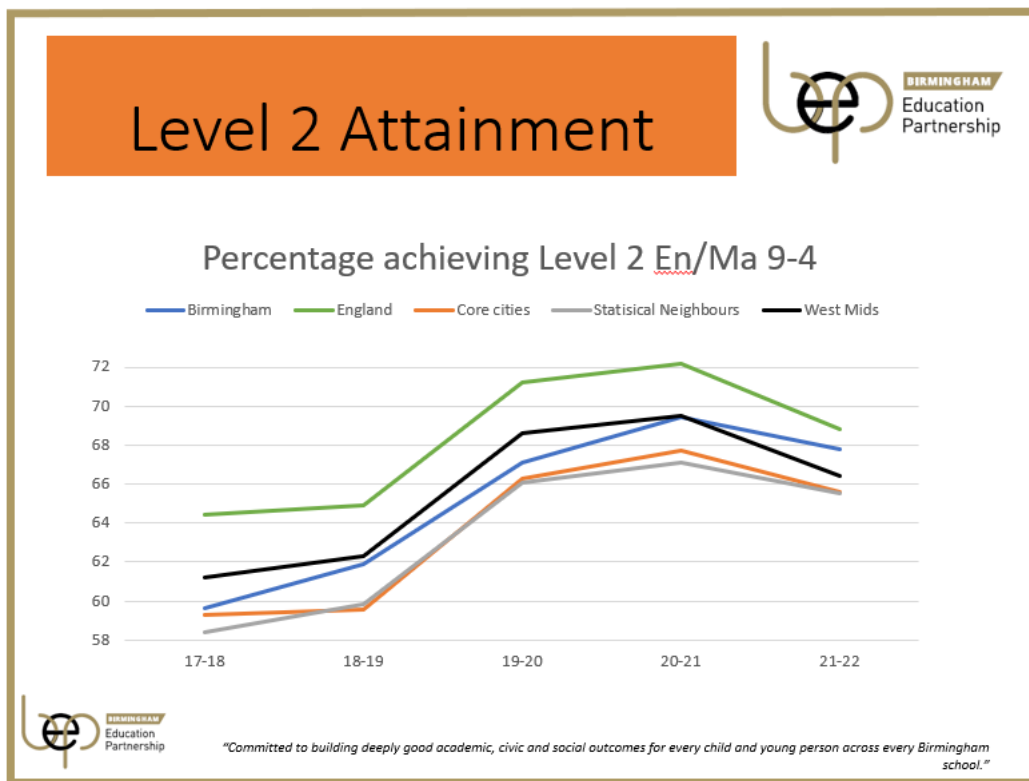
(From My Way Into the World of Work: [Labour Market Information - Birmingham Education Partnership \(bep.education\)](http://labourmarketinformation.org.uk/))



3.2 Educational Attainment in Birmingham

3.2.1 Graph 9 below shows the percentage of young people achieving level 2 English and Maths, grades 9 – 4. This shows that the city is performing well compared to other areas in the West Midlands, Core Cities and statistical neighbours and the gap between Birmingham and England is decreasing as the reduction in grades in 2021/22 for Birmingham was less than in England. This is consistent with the findings of the Scrutiny Inquiry, Closing the Skills Gap (2012). It was noted that, while the data was not shown on the graph, educational attainment in Birmingham is below London.

Graph 9: Group Level Attainment



From Birmingham Education Partnership Report to Economy and Skills OSC 11 January 2023: [CMIS > Meetings](#)



4 What Information, Advice and Services are Available to Help Young People in Birmingham Make Choices about their Future?

4.1 Evidence Gathering

4.1.1 During the Inquiry members met with a number of organisations to understand what information, advice and services available to young people in the city. Given the timescales for the Inquiry it was not possible to meet with all the relevant stakeholder but the information below provides examples of the range of support and services currently available.

4.2 Careers Advice in Schools and Further Education Providers

4.2.1 Birmingham Careers Hub, which sits within the Birmingham Education Partnership, works with employers and education providers to prepare young people to take the next step in their training / education and employment. The Hub works with a network of 108 secondary institutions including mainstream, special, alternative provision, Further Education and 6th Form colleges to implements the National Careers Strategy and Careers Leaders are trained to Level 7. The Hub also works with employers and has 100 business volunteers (Enterprise Advisers) that are matched with education institutions. The Careers Hub is supported by 15 'cornerstone employers' including HS2, Jacobs, Willmott Dixon, EY, UHB, NEC Group, BSMHT, Mace, Network Rail, AVFC, HSBC, National Grid, Lendlease, Cabinet Office, Severn Trent. The role of the Careers Hub is to ensure schools receive a rich and diverse offer of opportunities which help their students take the next step. In addition to the universal offer there are projects which target students in Alternative Provision, SEND schools, students with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH), high risk of being Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) and Elective Home Education (EHE). The Birmingham Education Partnership also provides the school improvement service across Birmingham.

4.2.2 Examples of some of the work of the Hub provided were:



- Eden Boys brought in the Royal Navy to deliver a Computing Mechanical Engineering & Science Workshop in science lessons. The students were involved in an interactive session which helped them to develop their problem solving and team working skills but at the same time they got to hear about life in the Royal Navy and what they would need to achieve at school to get there. A
- George Dixon invited the Director of Sanako to deliver to students in years 7, 8 and 9, to help them to understand how language skills link to careers and the world of work, they also have a key theme for 2023 year 10 students 'developing skills for employment'.
- Doctor from Birmingham QE visits Holyhead Yr12 students.
- Eden Girls – Resin and I – thriving online business selling unique gifts including bookmarks, pendants and keyrings which are customisable. Using business acumen to maximise sales; promoting their business on social media to advertising posters. Creating eco-friendly products has been a keen focus.
- Birmingham Careers Hub Incubation Project – Students at the The Reach and The Edge working with self employed landscapers to design and build their own borders at Kings Heath Park.
- Students from special schools have created their own videos to tell their stories developing their digital and creative skills.

4.2.3 The Careers Hub and providers of Further Education College courses work to the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks that define what world class careers provision in education looks like and provide a clear framework for organising the careers provision at your school or college. The benchmarks below are enshrined in statutory guidance:

- A stable careers programme
- Learning from careers and labour market information
- Addressing the needs of each student.
- Linking curriculum learning to careers.
- Encounters with employers and employees.
- Experiences of workplaces.
- Encounters with further and higher education.
- Personal guidance

4.2.4 The Careers Hub provided information to the Inquiry on the range of courses available for 16 – 18 year olds. The information from the government website showed over 9,000 qualifications available from providers in the city and a breakdown of the Key Stage 4 courses offered in schools in Birmingham included 243 tabs on the spreadsheet.



- 4.2.5 The Careers Hub website included the Labour Market Information tools that can be used to provide an overall view of the past, present and future of the world of work in the Birmingham and surrounding region:
- <https://bep.education/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/LMI-Guide-MY-WAY-Into-The-World-Of-Work.pdf>
- 4.2.6 It was noted that the Careers Hub is not responsible for the direct provision of careers advice in school but supports schools to develop and deliver the offer. It was also highlighted that careers advice and guidance and engagement with employers to provide a wide range of opportunities for students to explore career opportunities is not a high priority in Ofsted inspections. Members were also interested to understand how marketing and communications strategies were used to target information that is relevant to different geographical areas and demographic groups.
- 4.2.7 The provider access legislation specifies that schools must provide at least six encounters with approved providers of apprenticeships and technical education for all their students.

4.3 Further and Higher Education and Universities Careers Advice and Guidance and Employment Support

- 4.3.1 The Inquiry heard that universities recognised the importance of providing careers advice and support to students and heard of good practice across several institutions. It was of particular importance that the individual circumstance of students is taken into account to support them on their journey. Some of the key work and programmes that the Inquiry was informed about were:
- University College Birmingham employs ten employability tutors who work with college students completing FE courses and ten tutors working with Higher Education and Post Graduate students.
 - In the 21/22 academic year University College Birmingham successfully supported 1018 college students and 1013 higher education students into meaningful work placements across all our courses.
 - A team of Careers Advisors, within HIRED, ensure there has been a HIRED induction delivered to all students. This means that students are aware of the careers and work placement support available and the importance of gaining work experience for their future career. University College Birmingham has pledged 5 year post study careers support to its Alumni.



- Facilities are being developed to provide a bespoke training environment for sustainable construction technologies (University College Birmingham James Cond Sustainable Construction and Retro-Fit Centre).
- University College Birmingham's Partnership with the University of Warwick providing 1:1 maths support to local schools with student coaches.
- University College Birmingham's Creative Future Incubator supporting young entrepreneurs to launch their specialist creative business.
- The importance of universities understanding the needs of their local communities is of paramount importance. Newman University reported that 54% of students are from a minority background, 24% of disclosed disability, 70% are mature students over 21 with the majority under 25, most students are local, 93% are employed in the West Midlands after graduation.
- Newman University implemented Careers Progression Coaching as part of the Transformation West Midlands project. Coaches tracked local students and recent graduates to help them successfully enter highly skilled employment and further study after graduation. By building a relationship with a single coach, identifying challenges and using enhanced careers guidance techniques to break down barriers, allowing reflection and motivating students, and instilling accountability, students and graduates successfully moved forwards. Coaches worked with 344 final year graduates and recent graduates with the outcomes known for 270. 77% entered into highly skilled employment or further study and 98% moved onto a positive outcome.
- It was also recognised that while the higher education system is designed as a competitive environment, institutions often collaborate working with local businesses and funding bodies to benefit students. The Higher Levels Skills Match is a well-established project with Birmingham City University as the Lead Partner, Aston and Newman Universities as delivery partners which link with small and medium enterprises and graduate talent. Over 600 SMEs have been supported and the project is on target to engage with 300+ businesses in the current phase which will continue until the end of December 2023.
- Birmingham City University STEM UP began delivery in November 2020 with the aim of providing additional practical STEM skills for students, graduates and the wider workforce and has engaged with 1000 people from the local area.
- Birmingham City University is the lead partner with Newman University and West Smethwick Enterprise partners linking graduate talent to careers in Early Years and 3rd Sector supporting existing workforce.
- Birmingham City University Graduate Retune project achieved 630 positive outcomes: 287 graduate level jobs, 74 graduate level Kickstart job



placements, 27 other Kickstart placement 188 non-graduate level jobs and 54 in further study.

- Birmingham University Kickstart project was developed in response to the pandemic and provided a graduate level programme under the government Kickstart scheme to create jobs in the West Midlands Police Force. Across 2 recruitment cycles, 34 graduates secured graduate level jobs including 82 % from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic backgrounds and 100% of Aston and BCU graduates placed were from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic backgrounds.
- Members visited Birmingham City University's STEAMhouse which provides interdisciplinary ways of thinking that combined science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics aimed at finding innovative solutions to today's challenges. The new centre gives students access to facilities and equipment and opportunities to collaborate with people and businesses across multiple sectors.
- The University of Birmingham leads the work with other HE institutions through its Aim Higher outreach programme targeting schools and colleges where young people have low levels of progression into higher education, particularly in areas with high levels of deprivation and low levels of education. This collaborative approach to engagement in the region has worked well in comparison to other parts of the country.
- Careers Network at the University of Birmingham supports student employment pathways and this is especially important for local students as they more are likely to stay and work in the city, so connecting into local employers by University of Birmingham is very important.
- There are diverse routes into learning at the University of Birmingham including short courses for adults with more part-time learning offerings, distance and online learning planned.

4.4 The Prince's Trust

4.4.1 The Prince's Trust is a youth charity that helps young people aged 11 – 30 get into jobs, education and training. In Birmingham the Princes Trust offer includes:

- A 12-week programme and short courses to develop skills, find a routine and make friends.
- Education programmes targeting those most at risk of leaving education
- Employability Programmes helping young people to start a business or find a career.



- 4.4.2 In Birmingham over the last 12 months the Prince's Trust had 216 young people referred to the Enterprise Programme and averaged around 1 start up a month.

4.5 Community and Voluntary Sector Organisations

- 4.5.1 The Inquiry heard about the work of the Witton Lodge Community Association in building links with local employers and working with the local Job Centre to match job seekers. It was recognised that organisations that are embedded in local communities can engage with communities and work with partners to provide local employment support. Members were interested in this approach as a way of building the support available to small and medium size enterprises to engage in apprenticeships and training.
- 4.5.2 The Birmingham Race Impact Partnership (BRIG) have Jobs Fairs and recruitment events held across all the Jobcentres of the city. With some of the highest levels of deprivation in the country in our city, these events impact to varying degrees on the race disparity agenda. BRIG also has a role of Woman's Community Co-Ordinator. This role was specifically set up to work with economically inactive women from a BAME background to encourage, motivate and increase confidence in working with us and independently to support their personal circumstances. BRIG have had some success in engaging women from ethnic minority communities in the city with employment and also been able to engage successfully with local employers that have an interest in employing people well versed in community languages and have held Group events in our Jobcentres to support this.
- 4.5.3 BRIG also reported that the demand for English for Speakers of Other Languages courses (ESOL) is substantial and unfortunately the supply of provision across Birmingham is not adequate. DWP Senior Leaders are presently in early negotiations with the Nishkam Centre, a community-based organisation in Handsworth, as well as Birmingham City Council and other partners, to explore further collaborative opportunities to assist DWP customers. ESOL with employability is at the forefront of the negotiations to identify joint working that will ensure that ESOL for Employability is made available to customers.

4.6 Support for Care Experience Children and Young People

- 4.6.1 The Birmingham Children's Trust, delegated by Birmingham City Council, has a statutory duty to support care experienced young people up to the age of 21 and up to the age of 25 if the young person is in higher education or at university.



- 4.6.2 As at 12th December 2022, the Trust is supporting 980 care experienced young people aged 18-22 years. Performance on the Department of Education's indicator for the past 4 years has been on average 62% in Education, Employment and Training. This is notably above the national and statistical neighbour averages of 55%. The Trust works with CGL, RAP, EAT, DWP and other organisations to provide direct work with young people, live events and employer engagement. Young people have also been provided with laptops and broadband to feel connected and confident to take advantage of Employment, Education and Training (EET) opportunities.
- 4.6.3 One specific and significant aspect has been to offer 1:1 'careers' advice and guidance to all care experienced young people regardless of whether they are EET or NEET (Not in Employment, Education and Training). This has been in person and virtually pre, during and post the pandemic.
- 4.6.4 Typically, this will be a strength and solution-focussed conversation to help the young person move forward with their education, training, and employment plans. The most common related activities are researching EET options and making well-informed decisions, support with CV writing, job applications, personal statements for Uni and interview preparation.
- 4.6.5 The Trust has, since 2017, employed a dedicated role to initiate, coordinate and continue to enhance all matters that are EET for care experienced young people.
- 4.6.6 The EET manager, the Personal Advisers (PAs) and team managers remain aspirational, believing that all young people should be encouraged to achieve and reach their aspirations. The Trust appreciates that for some it will be a long road and we believe in the value of therapeutic activity and emotional support.
- 4.6.7 The importance of gaining, developing, and consolidating self-confidence is centred on increasing social connectedness through clubs, groups, and activities, as well as gaining qualifications and skills for work through training.
- 4.6.8 The EET manager meets with every 18+ team for an hour each month to look at the cohort of young people turning 18, 19, 20 and 21 that month. Currently the Trust refers to the following services for additional NEET support: CGL (YPP), Youth Employment Coach (DWP), Black Country Impact and other regional NEET support services, depending on the young person's location.
- 4.6.9 Since October 2017 the service has organised in-person conferences for care experienced young people every half term. Each has a strong careers and opportunities focus, but has also included health and wellbeing, financial education, and housing advice.
- 4.6.10 Each conference offers a marketplace of providers (EET and non-EET), presentations for young people and organisations, and workshops.
- 4.6.11 Currently there are over 137 care experienced young people in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th year of a degree course; some taking postgraduate degrees (5). Each year has



seen a steady number of young people gaining a university place and taking a very wide range of subjects.

- 4.6.12 The Trust as of 12th December 2022 is supporting 979 care leavers aged 18+. Due to many factors the Trust has and continues to support a substantial cohort of unaccompanied children who on admission have a claimed age of being 17 and hence their immediate life skill/educational need is ESOL and not university when 18. The Trust is currently supporting 203 18+ care experienced young people who are former unaccompanied children.
- 4.6.13 In August 2019 the Trust recruited seven care experienced young people to take up apprenticeships in business support in different service areas of the Trust. This being the service supporting care experienced young people, Youth Offending, Corporate Parenting, Children's Commissioning, Rights and Participation (2 posts) and Communications.

4.7 Birmingham City Council

- 4.7.1 The Council published the Breaking Down Barriers Report in 2021 which set out the skills and employment challenges young people faced following the pandemic. The report set out 10 key findings and 10 recommendations. Appendix 4 sets out the implementation of the recommendations reported to the Inquiry in November 2022.
- 4.7.2 **Apprenticeships:** The number of 16-18 year olds in apprenticeships has nearly trebled – from 248 in September 2021 to 798 in July 2022. However, Birmingham is lagging in the take-up of apprenticeships; for example figures reported to the Inquiry in November 2022 showed that for 16- and 17-year-olds, only 3.7% started an apprenticeship, and this compares to 4.7% nationally (representing an extra 315 apprenticeships for Birmingham) and 11% for top performing areas (representing an extra 3,480 apprenticeships for Birmingham). This provides an immediate opportunity to build a local partnership-based solution for apprenticeship matching and support that will achieve significant employment impact for young people and businesses.
- 4.7.3 The Council's 14 – 19 tracking team undertakes an annual Skills Sufficiency survey and works with colleges and Independent Training Providers to develop services to meet gaps in provision.
- 4.7.4 The Council will work to achieve a significant increase in the take up of apprenticeships in the city in collaboration with The Ladder for Greater Birmingham [Ladder for Greater Birmingham - Creating new Apprenticeships \(ladderforbirmingham.co.uk\)](https://ladderforbirmingham.co.uk) and the Multicultural Apprenticeship Alliance. This will include development of a matching support service at Library of Birmingham Youth Hub to be launched at National Apprenticeship week in February 2023 alongside the



independent advice and guidance provided perennially by Birmingham Careers Service.

- 4.7.5 The Council's HR Services will launch an Early Careers programme in 2023 and will procure refreshed apprenticeship teaching provision for staff. This will help to increase deployment of the Council's Apprenticeship Levy funds in support of new staff, and the Council will continue to support other employers to fund apprenticeship course costs through its Apprenticeship Levy Fund. A recent review of the fund activity to September 2022 showed it has supported 21 employers by contributing to 65 apprenticeships across all levels with the greatest number of apprenticeships being at Level 3, supporting the increased upskilling of the community past Level 2.
- 4.7.6 The Council recognises the need to ensure all communities benefit from apprenticeship opportunities and SEND is embedded in our response to SEND inspection.
- 4.7.7 Specific workstream key actions include:
- Inclusive Apprenticeship development: Scoping meeting taken place with local college and one local learning place provider to develop 12 inclusive apprenticeships from January 2023. To be rolled out across other providers.
 - Promotional campaign: disability confident employers: work commenced November 2022. Work to include resource pack.
 - Production of a Directory of Day Opportunities: in partnership with Birmingham Children's Trust. Directory will cover opportunities for those not in employment so they gain skills. To be launched in December 2022.
 - Building partnerships with voluntary and community sector organisations: a key focus for 2023/24.
- 4.7.8 **Construction Sector:** The latest development to support youth employment and skills is to support construction sector work experience offers. The team's built-environment sector employer relationships generate over approximately 250 work experience opportunities per annum on a rolling basis, and in 2023/2024 we are working to increase this figure to 500 to better target the opportunities to the local areas and the schools that most need it. We are looking to systematise the work experience offer for post school opportunities to ensure young people can access them. This is being undertaken through a web portal currently being trailed by WMCA and South and City College as partners to match work experience offers to essential work experience needs such as for T-Levels.
- 4.7.9 Our partnerships with the construction industry will continue to be developed, as detailed in the social value section above, and the HS2 building programme will bring 9,000 jobs to the area over the next 3 years. Whilst Birmingham residents are already



gaining 34% of all HS2 prime contractor roles in the West Midlands, we will be working to increase this success rate each year. Balfour Beatty Vinci are also offering bespoke support for our Care -Leavers including paid placements and ongoing support for that young person to succeed and progress.

- 4.7.10 **Commonwealth Games:** Birmingham has delivered a superb Commonwealth Games and we are committed to achieving a jobs and skills legacy, especially for the thousands of residents involved in the hospitality and event services industries, as well as for volunteering.
- 4.7.11 As part of B2022, through a unique partnership between and Birmingham City Council and our development partners: DWP Jobcentre Plus, West Midlands Combined Authority and a host of training providers and community-based employability providers, hundreds of unemployed residents, students, and residents 'at risk' of losing their jobs were able to access the opportunities from the Commonwealth Games construction phase, despite the challenging context of the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 4.7.12 Approximately 25% of these opportunities were secured by young people aged 15 – 24, over 50% going to residents under the age of 35, and our wider social value programme has brought further engagement with young people through schools, colleges, universities, and local community settings.
- 4.7.13 Targeted activity in local jobcentres and community settings in unemployment hotspots close to the developments has ensured that residents living in local communities have benefitted most. 55% of opportunities created on the Alexander Stadium and Perry Barr Residential Scheme were taken up by residents living in neighbouring areas of Erdington, Perry Barr, and Ladywood.
- 4.7.14 Following a successful 2-day West Midlands Showcase event in August aimed at supporting next steps for Games staff and volunteers, and the ongoing recruitment events with hospitality employers through a local Taskforce approach, partnership delivery for Legacy support will continue to be delivered in 2023/2024.
- 4.7.15 **Employment Support:** Since 2016 the Youth Promise Plus project (funded from the European Social Fund) has been supporting young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and this year the funding was extended to December 2023 (with delivery ceasing in October 2023).
- 4.7.16 YPP targets delivery for young people who face challenging life circumstances such as children in care, 18+ care experienced young people, young people referred by the youth offending service, the police, and social services, as well as young people engaged through careers and youth services' peripatetic and outreach work.



- 4.7.17 YPP has funded Council and partner/contractor staff to deliver person-centred support which can range from life-stabilisation (e.g. linking with housing, health and income support) to work-ready CV and interview preparation, as well as support for up to a month after the young person achieves an employment, education or training outcome.
- 4.7.18 The YPP project funds the equivalent of around 120 full time staff provided by a combination of Birmingham and Solihull Council teams and a range of specialist partners and contractors including: The Prince's Trust (who provide one to one support and an exciting range of programmes with major employers), University Hospital Birmingham Learning Hub (specialising in health care training and jobs links), Change Grow Live (intensive support for vulnerable young people such as care experienced young people) and Better Pathways (providing professional mental health advice). Outcomes include supporting young people to gain qualifications, and go into a range of employment, education and training such as college courses, traineeships, apprenticeships, and employment, which is the most frequent outcome.
- 4.7.19 Prior to the pandemic, the Youth Promise Plus project was achieving over 90% success rate against 15 of its 17 KPI targets, having supported over 14,000 NEET young people with just under 4500 having achieved a positive employment, education or training outcome since delivery fully commenced in early 2016.
- 4.7.20 The pandemic impacted on the engagement of young people and has also had the potentially positive impact of more young people staying on in education. Currently YPP supports approximately 1,500 young people per year and maintains its high levels of support for the monitored equality measures. Of the 17,096 young people engaged to date:
- 53% of young people are of Black or Asian Minoritised Ethnicity
 - 39% are long term unemployed
 - 20% have a self-declared disability or learning difficulty
 - 12% are 'lone parents'
- 4.7.21 The project offers the most intensive support to young people referred from the Children's Trust (from Children in Care, care experienced young people, Youth Offending and Supported Families services) from West Midlands Police and from specialist partners like Red Thread. The project also offers a wrap-around mental health service that provides low level mental health interventions addressing mental health barriers, e.g., managing anxiety, sleep and self-esteem issues.
- 4.7.22 Participants' issues can range from Generalised Anxiety Disorder to Phobias and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and can be hesitant in sharing the struggles they face with their condition. A recent example was a young person estranged from their parents



due to a complicated home life and younger siblings being taken into care. The situation has left the young person hesitant to engage in the Youth Promise Plus service, through fear of identifying and changing their circumstances.

- 4.7.23 The Youth Promise Plus service provides support over a longer period (most commonly between 13 and 52 weeks) so that each young person can learn coping strategies and find ways of overcoming their difficulties in a productive manner. Through Youth Promise Plus capacity we have been able to co-locate YPP staff with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) Youth Work Coaches to open a city-wide network of Youth Hubs; with a central Hub at Library of Birmingham, and smaller hubs at the Lighthouse (Lozells) and Factory (Longbridge) Youth Centres. JCP are also providing a Youth Hub based with Witton Lodge Community Centre and are planning to co-locate at the Dolphin Centre in East Birmingham. Youth Hubs offer more friendly locations than job centres, and more time per appointment with the work coach, plus joined up support from YPP and other providers on-site.
- 4.7.24 Through procurement social value and planning obligations negotiations, The Council's Employment Access Team maximise the Council's employer links and targeting of the jobs and skills opportunities generated for unemployed people and pupils/students. The team specialise in construction sector knowledge to lead and develop jobs and skills commitments that join up to local training provision. The team also monitor the jobs/opportunities created and whether local people gained them. As at August 2022 779 jobs/opportunities being monitored were successfully gained by unemployed local people since April – twice as many as the same time in the previous year. Prior to this work, construction teams would often be brought in by contractors from other areas and local people did not gain access to the vacancies.
- 4.7.25 Building on the Council's strong relationship with the development industry we are piloting a new social value approach to jobs and skills agreements, to widen our 'ask' across careers and community-based youth interventions with a view to creating an early intervention model of career pathways into the construction industry and ring-fencing targeted jobs for priority groups such as NEETs, care experienced young people, ex-offenders, homeless, veterans and people with disabilities.
- 4.7.26 **Jobs Fairs:** Collaborative working by the City Council with Jobcentre Plus and West Midlands Combined Authority has led to delivery of a series of successful Birmingham Jobs Fairs which attract around 1000 residents each, with approximately a quarter progressing into training or interviews each time. In October 2022 we have incorporated Cost of Living support, and this will continue in 2023/2024.
- 4.7.27 Based on consulting young people, the City Council has also created a series of smaller events held at Library of Birmingham for young people, focussed on the employment sectors they are most interested in (creative, digital, administration) and on apprenticeships and speedy recruitment events. The employment and skills team



were, at the time evidence was considered by the Inquiry, planning an Apprenticeship Event for National Apprenticeship Week in February, with another large Birmingham Jobs Fairs scheduled for Spring 2023.

- 4.7.28 **Early Intervention to Reduce Youth Unemployment:** Aligned to the rest of the Council, we are seeking to promote earlier intervention and for youth employment this means increased working with education providers. The Council has gained 'Partnerships for People and Place' funding from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to pilot working with 4 to 6 schools in East Birmingham. This project is now underway supporting up to 150 Year 11s with more dynamic employer links, mentoring for self-esteem and entrepreneurial thinking, with an exciting Reverse Mentoring event in January that will see the young people and local employers exchanging expert opinions on what makes for successful recruitment and employment of young people.
- 4.7.29 The Council's Employment and Skills Team is working with procurement colleagues to provide the same driving force to the rest of the Council's supply chain, to ensure that unemployment residents are linked in with new job opportunities. As well as working with contractors on their social value programme to link careers interventions with the SEND Improvement Plan, and recommendations in the Breaking Down Barriers Report to provide clear pathways from education to employment for disadvantaged groups, and those most at risk of becoming NEET.
- 4.7.30 As set out above, as part of B2022, through a unique partnership between and Birmingham City Council and our development partners, DWP Jobcentre Plus, West Midlands Combined Authority and a host of training providers and community-based employability providers, hundreds of unemployed residents, students, and residents 'at risk' of losing their jobs were able to access the opportunities from the Commonwealth Games construction phase, despite the challenging context of the Coronavirus pandemic
- 4.7.31 **Birmingham City Council Youth Service:** The Youth service works with young people 11-18. For those with SEND it is up to 25 in 16 centres across the city. One of the key features of the service is that, within the age range there is no time limit for support. The Youth Service supports young people to build confidence and resilience, facilitates accessible working opportunities also supports the Youth City Board which provides a voice for young people.
- 4.7.32 The Inquiry heard about case studies where support had been provided to young people and the connection with parents who sought support for their children.



4.7.33 **Birmingham City Council Procurement:** The Birmingham Charter for Social Responsibility (BC4SR) focuses on social value generation through procurement. This work is embedded however we want to refresh our approach so that:

- Contractors are incentivised to work with schools, colleges and NEET young people to provide careers IAG.
- We are clearly articulating the SEND improvement 'ask' within tender documentation
- We are supporting contractors to link in with special schools and colleges in the city who need more business engagement, careers IAG, work experience etc.
- We build in more specific SEND targets to the Birmingham Charter (subject to Cabinet approval).

4.7.34 **Birmingham City Council Planning Policy (Local Employment and Skills):** Through planning conditions and Section 106 agreements, developers and main contractors are targeted with local employment and work experience outputs. The Employment Access Team (EAT) are:

- Working with Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP); Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) to enhance work experience placements.
- Encouraging employers to join the 'Inspire to Higher' network – part of the CEC Employers Group, the network was set up by a group of employers with 'a mission to level up the SEND careers offer in schools and colleges.

4.8 Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership

4.8.1 The [Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership \(GBSLEP\)](#) was set up in October 2010 to help strengthen local economies, encourage economic development and enterprise, and improve skills across the region. It is formed of Birmingham and Solihull, with East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Tamworth, Bromsgrove, Cannock Chase, Redditch, and Wyre Forest. It is one of the largest partnerships in the country, covering a population of over 1.96 million people, and is home to 840,000 jobs. GBSLEP skills activity continues to target key strategic priorities across the Greater Birmingham and Solihull geography, focusing especially on the needs of young people and how addressing these will also impact and benefit local businesses and the wider economy.



- 4.8.2 A key part of this activity is coordinating various initiatives to ensure the positive impact for young people is maximised, including the Birmingham City Centre Enterprise Zone, Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, HS2 etc.
- 4.8.3 Through LEP transition and integration, GBSLEP Executive continues to work with partners to ensure such activity continues, to maximise the impact of GBSLEP's work and resources and develop and implement innovative solutions to the employment and skills problems faced. This is especially true of work with Birmingham City Council to deliver Breaking Down Barriers across various BCC Directorates. In addition to this coordination and influencing activity, GBSLEP has delivered and/or funded several employment and skills interventions specifically focused on young people, including apprenticeships and work-based learning including the Skills and Apprenticeship Hub and managing the apprenticeship levy on behalf of Birmingham City Council.
- 4.8.4 GBSLEP continues to liaise with the Ladder for Greater Birmingham to develop a model to continue support into a fourth year and align this activity with that of the Skills Service. GBSLEP supported the Ladder Academy through the Growing Places Fund youth focused capital funding opportunity which is now underway. The Ladder is one of the most successful GBSLEP skills interventions with over 2500 new apprenticeship starts created through the first three years of intervention and an additional 1000+ predicted through a fourth phase.
- 4.8.5 GBSLEP continues to support Birmingham City Council with the £300,000 Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) funded Partnerships for People and Place (PfPP) project. PfPP helps young people in East Birmingham navigate post-16 transition from full time education into work or further training. Eighty young people at risk of becoming NEET, across 5 partner schools, currently benefit from 1:1 and group support from dedicated Progression Coaches.
- 4.8.6 GBSLEP leads on employer engagement across key growth sectors, providing site visits to educate young people about their organisations and the Reverse Mentoring project.
- 4.8.7 Generation 22 (Gen22) sees 6000 new jobs created and 1000 social action placements created for 18-24 year olds and the initial £50,000 GBSLEP investment acted as the catalyst for this, establishing the licensing scheme that underpinned the project.
- 4.8.8 GBSLEP continues to work with key partners West Midlands Combined Authority, Birmingham City Council, Solihull MBC and the Careers and Enterprise Company to ensure the successful integration of careers hub services into such partner provision through the period of LEP transition. This involves ensuring the continuity of adequate funding during this period.
- 4.8.9 The GBSLEP Skills Service is also working with partners to deliver careers advice and support to meet employer need.



- 4.8.10 The Headspace led by the Creative Alliance, supports young creatives into. This has been recently completed with, of the 52 who started the programme, 35 reporting that they are in sustainable employment: 18 in full-time jobs and 17 now have more sustainable freelance work because of the £60,000 GBSLEP investment. Most of these are from the 30% most deprived areas of the UK.
- 4.8.11 Digital Innovators Launch Pad aims to bring specialist support to upskill young people 14-24 who are at risk of leaving education or vocational learning, or those impacted by the pandemic, by providing them opportunities to develop experience through real world challenges and connecting them with employers to create jobs or pathways to further learning. By December 2022, 350 young learners have been engaged and received careers advice across 5 education provider partners and 10 employers with one full scale project designed
- 4.8.12 Serendip Ideator - This project aims to bring specialist support to upskill young people 14-24 who are at risk of leaving education or vocational learning, or those impacted by the pandemic, by providing them opportunities to develop experience through real world challenges and connecting them with employers to create jobs or pathways to further learning. To date, 350 young learners have been engaged and received careers advice across 5 education provider partners and 10 employers with one full scale project designed.
- 4.8.13 Birmingham City Centre Enterprise Zone GBSLEP is developing the skills focused offer around the City Centre Enterprise Zone (EZ). This has included the appointment of an EZ Skills Coordinator and the commissioning of initial skills analysis work. The aim is to address the employment and skills needs of investors, both existing and potential future, to act as a catalyst for new investment and ensure existing investment is retained and grown. The work is also designed to ensure as much of the investment that comes into the EZ as possible is retained in the city and local communities, by ensuring local people have the skills necessary to take advantage of the employment opportunities created through EZ investment. This especially includes the benefits reaped by local young people.

4.9 Working with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

- 4.9.1 Increased place-based working is central to the Council's Levelling Up plans, and in 2022/2023 the Council will develop our own model for local integrated careers and employment support linking up essential services and additional training provision so that they are clear and coherent for local people to access. The Council will be working alongside the Combined Authority and Solihull Council to drive this forward



in East Birmingham and North Solihull, where together we are seeking additional powers from national Government via the Trailblazer Devolution Deal.

- 4.9.2 The Council is working with WMCA to develop a Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan for Birmingham that supports locally-led delivery and public sector leadership in accessible recruitment practices.
- 4.9.3 In 2019 the WMCA took over responsibility for the Adult Education Budget (EAB) The AEB funds training to help people find jobs. It also funds specialist training and helps to up-skill people already in work.
- 4.9.4 The WMCA has separate scrutiny arrangements, however it was important for the Task and Finish Group to understand the regional context and the ongoing negotiations for the Trailblazer Devolution Deal and the links with support for young people including the skills portal [Adult Education in the West Midlands - Find Your Future #FindYourFuture - Youth Employment UK](#)



5 Key Themes in the Evidence the Inquiry Received

5.1 Sources of Evidence

5.1.1 The Inquiry received evidence from a range of organisations at meetings. Organisations and individuals also responded to the online Be Heard questionnaire. Appendix 3 sets out the organisations that provided evidence to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Task and Finish Group meetings and Appendix 2 provides a summary of responses to the Be Heard questionnaire. The themes that have been identified reflect the questions set out in the terms of reference but also identify some additional issues.

5.2 What Young People told the Inquiry

5.2.1 The Inquiry Task and Finish Group met with a small number of young people at The Factory Youth Centre in Longbridge. This provided a powerful insight into the barriers that young people face to training and employment including:

- Careers guidance they received did not build on a young person's strengths and aspirations.
- Limited contact with employers to understand different careers and career pathways.
- Limited careers guidance during the pandemic and feeling judged by those providing guidance.
- The impact of the pandemic on mental health and opportunities for work experience to support CVs and university applications.
- Young people's personal circumstances including bereavement, health issues, homelessness, domestic abuse at home, caring responsibilities that affected their ability to engage with education and training and schools not understanding the reasons why.
- Schools do not teach young people how to manage their emotions.
- Pressure and expectation from schools and parents which restrict courses and career options.
- Pressure from schools around attendance which can be damaging for those with ongoing health needs.
- Experience of young people with SEND and the focus of provision for males.



- The importance of ongoing support with consistent relationships that are flexible when they need it and provide support during transition periods
- Parents who are supporting them find it difficult to navigate the system and this can be especially difficult for people whose first language is not English.
- Worry about university debt.
- The mental health impact of the pandemic is ongoing but mental health support was limited and not long term.
- Impact of the cost-of-living crisis on access to Wi-Fi, reduced opportunity for enrichment experiences when school trips are unaffordable, vouchers are not sufficient to buy a hot meal, the cost of travelling to education and training, the effect on young people's mental health, having to drop hopes and dreams.
- Young people could see the positive aspects of living in Birmingham but felt that people who live outside the city see it in a negative light. However, the Commonwealth Games has improved the profile of the city.

5.2.2 While the views of young people set out above were from a small group of young people, the issues were reflected by the Prince's Trust NatWest Youth Index and the barriers reported by FE and HE providers.

5.3 The Prince's Trust NatWest Youth Index

5.3.1 This survey carried out in 2022⁴ shows that young people's overall happiness and confidence has fallen to an all-time low. Index scores for almost all areas attributed to wellbeing are at their lowest to date. ([One in four young people say they will never recover from the emotional impact of the pandemic, as confidence falls to an all time low warns Prince's Trust | News and views | About The Trust | The Prince's Trust \(princes-trust.org.uk\)](https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/news-views/princestrustnatwestyouthindex2023)) Young people are particularly worried about their qualifications and training, which is an area that saw some of the biggest drops in confidence and happiness. Other big concerns are work and employment, with confidence in this area having stagnated at its lowest level, and relationships with friends and family; for which the study measured a notable decrease in happiness. Key findings from the Index are:

5.3.2 **Scarring effect of the pandemic:** The report reveals the long-lasting impact the pandemic has had on young people's wellbeing, with an alarming number of young people reporting a decline in their mental health. Many young people, particularly those who are unemployed and those who are from poorer backgrounds, feel as though they are set to fail in life.

⁴ Since the Inquiry received evidence from the Prince's Trust the Prince's Trust NatWest Youth Index 2023 has been published: www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/news-views/princestrustnatwestyouthindex2023 This reports that the wellbeing of young people has stagnated at an all time low.



- More than a fifth of young people (23 per cent) feel they will never recover from the emotional effects of the pandemic.
- Almost half of young people (48 per cent) report experiencing a mental health problem, with similar numbers stating their mental health had worsened during the pandemic (46 per cent).
- One in five young people surveyed (22 per cent) think they feel will fail in life, with this rising to a third among those who are NEET (34 per cent).
- Almost half of young people who are NEET (46 per cent) said being unemployed made them feel hopeless.
- Almost a quarter of young people from poorer backgrounds (21 per cent) and NEET young people (25 per cent) think their life will amount to nothing, no matter how hard they try.
- After emotional wellbeing, money is the area of young people's lives where they feel the least happy and confident, with 33 per cent of young people saying they are unhappy with the amount of money they have.

5.3.3 Fears for future work: The way young people view their own employability as well as what they want from work has shifted in the wake of the pandemic, with many worried about how recent disruption to their education and employment will affect their long-term prospects.

- One in five young people (20 per cent) don't think their employment prospects will ever recover from the pandemic. This figure rises to more than a quarter among those from poorer backgrounds (23 per cent) and who are NEET (27 per cent).
- Half of young people who have missed out on school or work due to the pandemic (50 per cent) believe they'll be overlooked for jobs.
- Three quarters of young people who have missed out on school or work due to the pandemic (73 per cent) are frustrated at missing opportunities to help their future career.
- Almost half of young people (48 per cent) now consider the impact of a job on their mental health before accepting.
- Additionally, over a quarter (28 per cent) state they want their job to be pandemic proof, with one in five (19 per cent) stating that the pandemic has motivated them to start a new career.

5.3.4 Almost half of young people (48 per cent) report experiencing a mental health problem, with similar numbers stating their mental health has gotten worse during the pandemic (46 per cent) or left them feeling burnt out (48 per cent). More than a third of young people (36 per cent) revealed that the pandemic will have lasting impacts on their levels of stress, and that the pandemic has increased their anxiety (44 per cent). After emotional wellbeing, money is the next area of young people's



lives where they feel the least happy and confident. One in three (33 per cent) state they are unhappy with the amount of money they have and 47 per cent say they never have enough money at the end of month for savings after paying for bills.

- 5.3.5 **An uphill struggle:** For those young people facing disadvantage and unemployment, the situation is even worse. Among those young people who are NEET, a quarter (23 per cent) report that they constantly feel anxious compared to 16 per cent of young people overall. For those from poorer backgrounds, this figure rises to 18 per cent.
- 5.3.6 **Personal Circumstance Comparisons:** The overall confidence and happiness young people feel differs according to their varying personal circumstances and identities. Unemployment, a lack of qualifications, financial insecurity and being from a Black, Asian or Other minority ethnic background or community are all factors that can contribute to a lower Index score. Of those who are affected by these factors, it is young people who are NEET who reported the lowest overall score this year.
- 5.3.7 For those young people from low-income backgrounds (who are indicated in this study as those who received free school meals), there is a six point drop in their overall Index score compared to the score of those from more affluent backgrounds. Similarly, there is a five point drop between the overall score of those young people who did not achieve more than five GCSEs graded A to C (or Scottish Standards levels 1 or 2, or the new GCSE grading of 4 to 9) and those who did. The findings also highlight a disparity between White young people and young people from Black, Asian and Other minority ethnic backgrounds and communities, with those from Black, Asian and Other minority ethnic backgrounds and communities scoring three points lower in their overall level of confidence and happiness.
- 5.3.8 **Pressures on Young Women:** The findings from 2022 suggest that young women are more likely than young men to have experienced a decline in their wellbeing and to feel worried about their future prospects. The Index shows that young women's overall wellbeing has dropped by one point, from 68 to 67, in a return to the lowest score ever recorded in the thirteen-year history of this report, last seen in 2020. Areas of particular concern for young women are their mental health and their work and employment, where their happiness and confidence scores were notably lower than those of young men. A fifth of young women (22 per cent) worry that the pandemic has caused a lasting negative impact on their self-worth, compared to 15 per cent of young men, and almost half of young women in education, employment or training (47 per cent) acknowledge that building more self-confidence is key to helping them take their next steps, compared to 32 per cent of young men. Some of the ways in which young women feel they could improve their confidence include having access to more support and inspiration. Half of young women (50 per cent) agree that having a mentor would improve their confidence in their future, while 49 per cent said seeing young people like themselves achieve their goals gives them confidence. Whilst there might be various reasons for the differences in scores for young men and young



women, and all we are reflecting is an individual's own perception of their wellbeing, the Youth Index shows some significant differences between men and women.

- 5.3.9 **Supporting Young People to Build Confidence and Resilience:** The percentage of young people in Birmingham who achieve Level 2 qualifications in English and Maths is higher than the West Midlands, Core Cities and statistical neighbours. However, research on how young people feel about their future and the feedback from young people during the Inquiry shows that young people feel unprepared to make the choices about their next steps in education and training and do not have information about the career pathways that are available.
- 5.3.10 Mental health was identified by all contributors as an issue that affects young people's confidence and ability to access skills and employment. The impact of the pandemic was a significant issue and it was highlighted that further education and employment opportunities are likely to support positive mental health in the long run, but only once a young person has a stable enough sense of wellbeing to engage with those opportunities in the first place.
- 5.3.11 The pandemic had a double negative effect for young people as it both directly affected their mental health through lock down, but the ongoing impact of gaps in education further affect their confidence and ability to progress.
- 5.3.12 An important area of work to help build young people's confidence in their future is to help them to understand the support and opportunities that are available. From the evidence we received the following points were made:
- Importance of learning about opportunities pre-secondary school
 - Support young people to develop their interests / hobbies. Interest in sport / art etc can open up other careers
 - Access to real employment opportunities and exposure to employers is very important. Where young people's social capital is low, they need support to be able to understand what real employment opportunities in the city are and to see routes for them to access those opportunities. Success stories from local people who look and sound like them
 - Local training and education which lead directly into well paid jobs
 - Provide more peer-to-peer informal learning opportunities; these create space for young people to navigate their local social and physical environments.
 - How to communicate opportunities that are available in way that is accessible and meaningful to young people.
- 5.3.13 The evidence received also highlighted some practical skills that will help young people show employers what they can offer:
- Mock interviews with feedback on how to improve



- Genuine CV writing support
- Helping young people to understand finance, budgeting and tax

5.3.14 The inquiry also heard how the focus of Ofsted on educational attainment means some schools provide limited careers advice and the curriculum does not include life skills and communication skills that young people require when moving on to employment.

5.4 Responding to Needs of Children and Young People and Addressing Structural Inequities

5.4.1 The Inquiry heard that young people's life and family circumstance could negatively affect their ability to engage with skills and employment. What became clear during the inquiry is that while some of these disadvantages relate to individual circumstance others related to structural inequities.

5.4.2 At an individual level we heard about the importance of high-quality careers advice that understands a young person's wider circumstances. Without an 'all-round' view of a young person's circumstances resilience is difficult to achieve because contextual factors (mental health, family life, cost of living crisis, housing, debt) are likely to create multiple barriers to accessing training and staying in sustainable work. Further and higher education providers reported a significant number of their students are parents or have caring responsibilities and childcare, as nationally reported, is on average £300 a week. Difficulties for young people on benefits were also identified e.g. young people in supported accommodation may be 'advised' of an eviction from their landlords if they work as the landlords rely on getting full housing benefit – only available to young people who aren't working and hence a very strong disincentive to secure employment. Several contributors highlighted the cost of travel for young people which reflected the findings of the Breaking Down Barriers report.

5.4.3 During the Inquiry members heard about the importance of 'building bridges' between communities and opportunities. As well as having the information about the opportunities that are available, young people need bridges to be able to move between their communities and institutions / employers while maintaining their identity. The cultural and generational differences between young people and institutions and employers was described as a two-way exchange – giving young people the skills and confidence to communicate but also encouraging employers to find different ways to recognise and assess what young people have to offer.

5.4.4 The role of the Council and partners as corporate parents and the disadvantages faced by young care experienced people was identified as a specific need. Good



practice for care experienced young people included support for applications, interview practice, guaranteed interview, ring fenced internships.

5.4.5 In addition to the difficulties faced by individuals the inquiry also heard about structural inequalities and the intersectional disadvantage faced by individuals and communities. It is difficult for parents to navigate the complex education / skills system, and this becomes more difficult for a young person with SEND. The Inquiry heard that Data from the Department for Education shows that 2.2% of children have autism and there is an increase in diagnosis of Autism at transition points, in Reception and Year 7. Further data from the University of Birmingham Disability, Inclusion and Special Needs Department showed children with autism are two times more likely to be excluded, which not only has implications for the young person but may also limits parents' ability to work.

5.4.6 The data below from the University of Birmingham Disability, Inclusion and Special Needs Department illustrates the interrelation between different autism, race, children receiving free school meals and exclusions that shows a complex picture of increasing disadvantage for some groups. The added difficulty for parents whose first language is not English in navigating was also identified as an issue.

Table: 7 Difference in Prevalence Rates of Autism by Ethnic Group

Ethnicity classification	Ethnicity rates in the whole school population (%)	Ethnicity rates in the autism population (%)
Bangladeshi	1.8	1.8
Indian	3.1	1.8
Pakistani	4.4	3
Black African	3.8	4.7
Gypsy Roma	0.3	0.2
White British	66.1	70
White Other	6.4	4.5

- 28% of children on the autism spectrum are on free school meals compared to 17% of the whole school population
- Around 70% of children in Birmingham schools are from ethnic minorities.
- Highest rates of exclusion:
 - Gypsy/Roma (0.56%)
 - Travellers of Irish heritage (0.53%)
 - Black Caribbean (0.44%)



- Mixed race - White and Black Caribbean (0.42)
 - Black Caribbean boys were 44 times more likely to be permanently excluded than Chinese boys
- 5.4.7 It was also reported that ASDAN qualifications that are taken by some young people with SEND are not recognised by employers which creates another barrier to employment.
- 5.4.8 Other issues that were identified that affect the visibility of ethnic minority groups were:
- Educational profession does not represent the population of Birmingham – about 90% are White.
 - Lack of exposure to positive role models from different ethnic minorities in careers advice and guidance.
- 5.4.9 Data reported to the Inquiry by Birmingham Race Impact Partnership showed the differential rates of employment across ethnic groups in Birmingham:
- Employment rates for working age ethnic minority people in West Midlands Group has risen from 58.9% to 64.9% over the past five years. Although BAME employment rate are generally not available below regional/Group level due to sample sizes, data for Birmingham local authority is available due to its size. The employment rate for ethnic minorities of working age in Birmingham Local Authority is 59.7% (ONS Annual Population Survey, April 2021 to March 2022). This compares to a rate of 64.9% across the West Midlands region as a whole, and 67.9% across the UK.
 - Birmingham is making progress in reducing employment inequalities for ethnic minorities: over the past five years the employment rate has risen by 3.6 percentage points (from 56.1% in the year to March 2017 to 59.7% in the year to March 2022).
 - Over the same period the employment rate for working age white people in Birmingham rose by just 0.6 percentage points from 71.7% to 72.3%. This compares well to the UK as a whole where over the same period the employment rate for working age ethnic minorities rose 4 percentage points from 63.9% to 67.7%. It is lagging the West Midlands region as a whole – the employment rate for working age ethnic minorities rose by 6.0 percentage points over the past five years, from 58.9% to 67.9%.
- 5.4.10 The Stone Wall report, Shut Out (2020) reported on the finding from research with LGBT young people who were not in education, employment or training. The young people reported feeling isolated and bullied, that LGBT people were invisible and there was a lack of LGBT inclusion at school. Transition points between schools and



moving to college were identified as points of additional stress and intersectional disadvantage was also identified for LGBT young people e.g., those who were disabled.

5.5 Complexity and Fragmentation of the Skills and Employment Ecosystem

5.5.1 The complexity and fragmentation of the skills and employment systems is not just an issue for Birmingham or the West Midlands and a paper from the University of Birmingham reflects the national picture and noted research which found:

“The challenge for skills policy in England is not setting out ambitious reform plans, it is sticking to them. Since the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992 there have been fifteen government commissioned reviews of FE or the skills system in England, or significant aspects of it, at least fifteen whitepapers and five major Acts of Parliament.” Westod (2021).

5.5.2 The research from the University of Birmingham⁵ described the skills ‘ecosystem’ and compared this to a biological ecosystem, with all separate parts connected, interdependent and working together in order to function well as a whole. It requires: (1) a catalyst for its start; (2) continual nourishment; (3) a supportive host environment; and (4) a high degree of interdependence amongst the stakeholders and partners in the system. The research concludes that “local areas are best served by policies that seek to nurture skills ecosystems, which stimulate dialogue and collaboration between further and higher education institutions and build demand among employers across businesses and public services.”

5.5.3 The number of organisations that contributed to this inquiry starts to give an indication of the range and scale of the ecosystem in Birmingham – but this is just the starting point as the ecosystem ultimately includes all schools, colleges and universities, employers and employer representative bodies, Birmingham City Council, the West Midlands Combined Authority, job centres, unions, community and voluntary sector organisations and sector-based organisations.

5.5.4 The education and training system is determined nationally and creates an environment where colleges and universities compete for students and funding. However, within this system the Inquiry heard of examples of collaboration between institutions designed to meet the needs of Birmingham students and provide the workforce employers in the city need. The challenge for Birmingham was described

⁵ City-REDI / WMREDI Universities and Regions Forum Policy Briefing December 2022

How can universities, colleges and employers deliver the skills for local productivity, innovation and prosperity? Anne Green, Chris Millward and Abigail Taylor



as how to sustain partnership in competitive environment and develop the co-ordination and collaboration across skills to create the supply of skills and build demand. The role organisations saw for Birmingham City Council is to facilitate and co-ordinate the ecosystem.

- 5.5.5 The national strategy and policy that may facilitate the governance and funding to develop this approach are:
- 5.5.6 Trailblazer Devolution Deals: The Trailblazer Devolution Deal which seeks to further devolve funding and decision making from central government. The Inquiry was informed at the Committee meeting in November 2022 that the draft proposal included careers services, employment support and business support.
- 5.5.7 Local Skills Investment Plans: The requirement under the Skills and Post-16 education Act 2022 for areas to have a Local Skills Improvement Plan that is led by a designated employer representative body (ERB). The statutory guidance sets out that the LSIP should:
- Set out the key priorities and changes needed in a local area to make post16 technical education or training more responsive and closely aligned to local labour market needs;
 - provide a representative and coherent employer view of the skills most needed to support local economic growth and boost productivity, and improve employability and progression for learners;
 - set out actionable priorities to better meet these skills needs that employers, providers and stakeholders in a local area can get behind to drive change in ways that add value to relevant local strategies and effectively join-up with other parts of the local skills system;
 - not attempt to cover the entirety of provision within an area but focus on the key changes and priorities that can gain traction and maximise impact informed by robust underpinning evidence, meaningful dialogue between employers and providers and constructive engagement with MCAs/GLA, LEPs, LAs and other stakeholders;
 - be drawn up for a period of three years and be reviewed and updated as appropriate during this time to ensure it remains relevant and reflects the skills needs of the specified area;
 - describe how skills, capabilities and expertise required in relation to jobs that directly contribute to or indirectly support Net Zero targets, adaptation to Climate Change or meet other environmental goals have been considered.



5.6 Skills Funding

- 5.6.1 The Inquiry heard that the funding arrangements for work across the skills and employment support eco-system is extremely complex and is in a period of transition from European funding to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. All European Social Fund (ESF) funded projects must complete expenditure by 31 December 2023. Currently the YPP project will complete operational delivery on 31 October 2023, leaving 2 months for the central project team to validate the performance submissions, complete the evaluation and make final payments.
- 5.6.2 Birmingham City Council currently receives £3m of ESF Funding to support work undertaken within Careers, Youth and Employment & Skills Services. Birmingham has applied for £3.2m of SPF funding through the logic chain for People & Skills 2024/25 with a further £0.5m being proposed to be funded from the Business Support logic chain. Assuming the SPF application is successful there is no funding gap for the Council during 2024/25, however, the transition between the two funding mechanisms leaves a 6-month gap in funding c.£1.5m during financial year 2023/24. As this funding gap was anticipated in 2021/22, an amount of £1.449m was set aside within the Council's Financial Resilience Reserve at the end of 2021/22. It is now proposed that this amount be released for the Directorate to utilise during 2023/24 as part of the Financial Plan which will be considered by Full Council in February 2023.
- 5.6.3 The funding gap for external organisations remains and they will be able to apply for SPF funding in another category (Communities and Place) which will be available in 2023 / 2024 but will have to show their delivery fits with the purpose and priorities of the SPF Investment Plan and the process may be competitive. The issue of the reliance on funding that is allocated for short periods of time affects the stability of the workforce. Details of the anticipated UK SPF Investment Plans (at November 2021) are given below:

UK SPF 2023 – 2025 Investment Plans (at November 2021)
Funding period: 2023-2025

West Midlands: £88m (POTENTIAL 50% allocated to business support pillar & 50% allocated to LAs)

Indicative value BCC local spend: £17.5m and indicative split:
Funding period: 2023-2025

Year 1 (22/23): £2,118,950

Year 2 (23/24): £4,237,899

Year 3 (24/25): £11,103,296

Total: £17,460,145

(From Skills Finding and Data Report to Economy and Skills OSC 9 November 2022:



[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](http://cmis.uk.com)

- 5.6.4 The role of the Commonwealth Games in addressing youth skills and unemployment was reported to the Inquiry, including the potential benefits of legacy funding.

5.7 Work Experience

- 5.7.1 During the pandemic young people did not have opportunities for work experience, placements, and volunteering. Young people told the Inquiry that they worried that they will not be able to provide evidence needed on applications without this experience.
- 5.7.2 Cost of travel was also identified as an issue which can prevent young people from accessing relevant work experience.
- 5.7.3 Feedback through the Be Heard survey suggested that work experience could be more flexible rather than a 2-week block and could involve a mixture of hosted visits to an employer by a group; Q&A/Meet the employer sessions, work shadowing and as well as more traditional placements. Suggestions were also made about how to encourage employers to provide work experience. These included supporting employers with risk assessments, providing a matching service and considering incentives for employers e.g., local business rates relief for offering placement and training opportunities

5.8 Mentoring

- 5.8.1 The Inquiry heard about some mentoring initiatives in schools and the Prince's Trust programmes. However, these supported a limited number of young people in the city. As part of a formal mentoring model, mentors are trained and accredited in order both to recognise the mentors' time, effort and skill, and to create a standardised and safe model of mentoring. This may seem very formal to young people and a big commitment for mentors. The option of developing a 'Trusted Adult' role as someone who will meet with a young person to provide encouragement and support was also suggested. It was also recognised that any mentoring / trusted adult scheme must provide adequate checks and safeguarding and ensure that the mentors reflect the diversity of the city.
- 5.8.2 A mentoring programme will require funding to provide the co-ordination and administration. While the scale of a mentoring programme will be in part determined by the funding available, it would be important that those who have least access to social capital within their families and communities should have priority.



- 5.8.3 The advantage of a mentoring programme is that it is led by the interests and needs of the mentee. It was highlighted that this should allow young people to go on a journey with a mentor that is not restricted by funding and claims.

5.9 Apprenticeships

- 5.9.1 As identified earlier in the report, the uptake of apprenticeships in Birmingham is lower than other areas. While the number of apprenticeships has increased recently the Inquiry heard the reasons for the low uptake were:
- Young people not knowing how to access apprenticeships. They do not apply to a college for an apprenticeship – they must apply for an apprenticeship with an employer.
 - The perception that apprenticeships are not valued much as other qualifications.
- 5.9.2 Small and medium size businesses make up a large proportion of employers in the city. The bureaucracy involved in apprenticeships too great for businesses that do not have a human resources function and administrative support to complete paperwork.
- 5.9.3 It was also reported to the Inquiry that there a correlation between young claimants GCSE grades for English and Maths and access to apprenticeships. Without grade 4 (C) they will not be able to complete their End Point Assessment or progress onto other HE awards net result being progression barriers despite having other talents.



6 Conclusions

- 6.1.1 The skills and employment ecosystem is extremely complex and difficult even for professionals to navigate. There are some excellent projects and programmes that meet the needs of young people – but the challenge is ensure this high level of support and advice is provided consistently across the city and is accessible to all young people. Individual young people and the organisations that are working with them need to know what they are aiming for and how to get there.
- 6.1.2 Where there is good practice, we want to ensure that this is communicated to young people in a way that is meaningful to them so that they can take advantage of the opportunities this city can offer. As a super diverse city, with a young population, we also want to ensure that all young people can develop their talents and pursue their dreams. We have received evidence of the inequities that exist and particularly the intersectional inequities that make it more difficult for some of our communities to access skills and employment. The imperative to improve the skills and employment outcomes for our diverse communities is twofold – that everyone should have the opportunity to achieve their potential but also for Birmingham to grow and thrive we must ensure that the existing inequities previously experienced by a minority does not become the experience of the majority. We want to ensure that there is transparent data that will help organisations to understand how to work together to meet the needs of our diverse communities and target services and resources appropriately.
- 6.1.3 As Councillors we are also corporate parents and want to shine a light on the responsibility the Council and partners have to children and young people who are looked after by the Birmingham Children’s Trust and those who are care experienced.
- 6.1.4 Where there are issues that are beyond the scope of the Council and our local and regional partners, we want to lobby government departments to recognise the pressures that the education system puts on schools and young people to perform against narrow targets, to simplify the apprenticeship process for young people and employers and share data to enable local organisations to target services effectively.
- 6.1.5 The transition from European funding regimes to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund requires a strategic focus to understand what the risks are to existing programmes and enable organisations to collaborate to get the greatest benefit from the funding that will be available.
- 6.1.6 Within these challenging circumstances there are opportunities to build a local system that will deliver for Birmingham. The current discussions on the Trailblazer Devolution Deal provide the opportunity to establish devolved arrangements that will enable the City Council and the West Midlands Combined Authority to respond to local need rather than delivering national programmes and strategies that are not designed for Birmingham. In the timescales for this inquiry, we did not have time to investigate the development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan for the West Midlands. However, we want to ensure that the City Council is engaged with this process and the data and insight within the City Observatory is used to inform this plan.



- 6.1.7 In developing our recommendations, we have focussed on the issues where this Scrutiny Inquiry can have the greatest impact. The mental health and well-being of young people has been a consistent theme across all our evidence gathering sessions. There is a separate Scrutiny Inquiry on this issue and the evidence we have received will be shared with the Task and Finish Group undertaking mental health inquiry that will report to City Council later this year.
- 6.1.8 Birmingham has a lower uptake of apprenticeships and while the number of apprenticeships has increased recently this must continue. It is essential that small and medium size enterprises are engaged in this so that they have the skilled workforce they need and provide the training opportunities for the workforce of the future.
- 6.1.9 We have heard clearly from young people that careers advice and guidance must consider their circumstances and aspirations. Young people want to understand, before they choose the subjects they will study, what the job opportunities are in the city. These discussions should start at primary school. We also want organisations in Birmingham to work together to find a way to communicate to young people so that they not only understand the current job opportunities but also the developing sectors and sectors where there is a shortage of skills. We heard that transition points in a young person's life can result in them disengaging from training and employment and that this is a specific risk for young people with additional needs. We want to ensure that during these transition points young people with additional needs have 1-1 support and that the Council explores if there are other professionals that can be trained and use resources to provide initial information and guidance on skills.
- 6.1.10 The importance of young people developing social capital and understanding how the world of work operates was another strong theme within the Inquiry. We received a range of views about how a mentoring scheme should be developed – but all will require a level of resourcing. We have not specified how a mentoring / trusted adult scheme should be developed as this will to a large extent depend on the funding available, however we have set out our expectations that the scheme should reflect the diversity of the city and that travel costs should not be a barrier to young people taking part.
- 6.1.11 The issue of employment support highlighted the important role of community organisations that are connected to the people in their area can have in building links between employers and job seekers. We want the Council to work with partners to build on this good practice across the city.
- 6.1.12 Based on these conclusions, members have agreed recommendations that will be considered by City Council. However, there are parts of the terms of reference that were not considered in detail due to the timescales, and members have identified additional issues that they will consider as part of the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme. These include:



- Inviting the Youth City Board to meet with members of the Economy and Skills OSC on an annual basis to hear the views of young people to inform the Committee's work⁶.
- Engaging with employers from specific sectors e.g., construction, digital and creative industries to understand the employer perspective.
- Monitor the Social Value Procurement to understand the number of apprenticeships created through the social value elements of Council contracts.
- Work experience and voluntary work for young people.

6.1.13 The young people we met as part of this Inquiry inspired us with their resilience and ambition. They told us their stories so that we can help improve skills and employment opportunities for all young people across the city. While there is much work for the Council and our partners to do, we are confident that the young people of the city will rise to these challenges and opportunities.

⁶ These meetings may be held jointly with other relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees



7 Recommendations

7.1.1 Based on the evidence received during the Inquiry, the following recommendations have been made:

	Recommendations	Responsibility	Completion Date
R01	<p>Fragmentation and Complexity of the System Council asks the Deputy Leader to work with partners, including the WMCA, Chamber of Commerce, Colleges, Universities, Unions, SMEs, sector-based organisations and Community and voluntary organisations to:</p> <p>a) Map skills strengths, needs (current and future) and provision across the Birmingham skills ecosystem and agree priorities.</p> <p>b) Ensure that the City Observatory works with the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce as the Employer Representative Body for the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) to make sure the plan draws on the mapping work and existing data for Birmingham that partners already hold.</p> <p>c) Agree the governance arrangements and infrastructure to support collaboration to co-ordinate the delivery of agreed priorities identified through the mapping / LSIP process.</p>	Deputy Leader	October 2023
R02	<p>Confidence and Resilience Young people need to understand the current and future skills and job opportunities in the city:</p> <p>a) In the short term, Council asks the Deputy Leader to take forward work with careers advice providers to ensure the Labour Market Information (Labour Market Information - Birmingham Education Partnership (bep.education)) is updated and promoted as a key resource for careers advisors in schools and colleges.</p> <p>b) In the medium-term Council asks the Deputy Leader to take forward work with</p>	Deputy Leader	<p>July 2023</p> <p>March 2024</p>



	<p>partners to use the information from the local mapping as set out in recommendation R01 to develop a website /online resources that are relevant to young people and should be maintained with up-to-date information. The Council should work with partners to explore other methods of communicating this information with young people including social media and marketing. Ideally this should be co-produced with young people.</p>		
R03	<p>Funding Building on the information provided to the Inquiry, Council asks the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families to work together with partners to map the funding gaps and projects in Birmingham relating to employment and skills that are at risk as a result of the transition to new funding regimes including the 3 pillars of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up funds and that the Council facilitates a collaborative approach with partners to achieve maximum benefit from the funds that will be available to Birmingham.</p>	<p>Deputy Leader Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families</p>	<p>June 2023</p>
R04	<p>Lobbying on Central Government on National Issues: Council asks that the Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families and the Chair of the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee write a joint letter to the Department for Education and Department for Work and Pensions to lobby on the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ofsted should widen the focus of school inspections to include a greater emphasis on life skills, careers advice and wellbeing. • The process for apprenticeships should be simpler for young people, colleges and businesses to increase the number of SMEs that are able to engage and the number of young people who apply. • The Department for Work and Pensions provides data on the gender and ethnicity of job seekers and those who are 	<p>Deputy Leader Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families Chair of the Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>	<p>May 2023</p>



	<p>b) Use the mapping of skills strengths, needs (current and future) and provision across the Birmingham skills ecosystem and agrees priorities to act as a catalyst to bring together schools, colleges, universities and employers to inspire young people to take the opportunities that are available in the city.</p> <p>c) Ensure young people are provided with information about a wide range of education, training including apprenticeships and careers to understand the options that are available to them (Linked to R0 2)</p> <p>d) Young people receive support that considers their personal circumstances and aspirations. Young people who have additional vulnerabilities and needs including SEND should receive 1-1 support, including during transition stages. The council should explore how other professionals who have existing supportive relationships with young people with additional needs can be trained to provide initial careers support and sign posting.</p>		
<p>R07</p>	<p>Young People with Additional Vulnerabilities Council asks the Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities to work with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families to pass a political commitment to treat care experience as a protected characteristic, to ensure that this group receive the support, guidance and opportunities that enable them to succeed. Cabinet Members are also asked to ensure that, building on good practice that is in place, young people with SEND also receive appropriate support and guidance as set out below. In order to implement these recommendations, it is proposed that Council asks the relevant Cabinet</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities</p> <p>Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources</p> <p>Cabinet Member Children, Young People and Families</p>	<p>June 2023</p>



	<p>Members to undertake an assessment of the resources required to implement the following:</p> <p>a) The Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities and Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families review and develop new Council processes and procedures to guarantee interviews for young people with care experience and / or SEND who meet the criteria for jobs. This should include the development of monitoring and evaluation to track the impact of these new policies and procedures.</p> <p>b) The Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities and Cabinet Member Children, Young People and Families ensure that the right support and guidance is in place to enable young people with additional vulnerabilities to succeed in the Council, including young people with care experience and/or SEND. This should include monitoring and evaluation processes, including exit interviews to track impact. Once developed, the policies and procedures should be shared with organisations on the City Board to encourage partners to adopt this good practice.</p> <p>c) The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources explores opportunities with council contractors to include guaranteed interviews for care-experienced young people at entry/apprentice level roles and ringfence opportunities for work experience, apprenticeships and work opportunities for care-experienced young people.</p> <p>d)The Cabinet Member for Social Justice, Community Safety and Equalities works with the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families to support the</p>		<p>October 2024</p> <p>October 2024</p> <p>October 2024</p> <p>October 2024</p>
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	<p>development of BCT's 'Develop Me' Mentoring programme, ensuring that our children in care and care-experienced young people have mentors from the Council who can support and guide their development in areas like transitions, education and employment.</p>		
R08	<p>Mentoring (BDB Rec 1, Rec 4) Council asks the Deputy Leader to work with partners to secure funding for a mentoring programme that provides a range of opportunities that are flexible and meet young people's needs including formal mentoring and developing the role of trusted adults who will support and encourage young people as they navigate their education, training and work. The mentoring programme should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Be targeted at young people who experience disadvantage and focus on young people on pupil premium, young people with SEND and care experienced young people. b) Ensure that mentors / trusted adults reflect the diversity of the City and include people with lived experience of overcoming challenges in their careers. c) Ensure that funding for programmes for work experience and mentoring programmes include in the budget travel costs for young people who would otherwise struggle to participate. 	Deputy Leader	October 2023
R09	<p>Apprenticeships Council asks the Deputy Leader to work with the Birmingham Ladder, Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement Districts, Small Business Federation, other business organisations and education providers, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Promote apprenticeships to small and medium enterprises, including providing information about how apprenticeships work and the benefits to businesses of employing apprentices and young people 	Deputy Leader	October 2023



	<p>b) Signpost small and medium enterprises to sources of administrative and business support, to enable apprenticeship schemes to be high quality and that apprentices receive the ongoing wraparound and tailored support they need to succeed.</p>		
R10	<p>Employment Support (BDB Rec 10) Council asks the Deputy Leader to build on existing good practice across the city and works with local organisations, Job Centres, Community centres, youth centres, libraries and employment support projects to develop Local Employment Partnerships to engage with small and medium size enterprises and match job seekers and those seeking apprenticeships to local employment opportunities. This should be linked in with the Council's early intervention and prevention programme, recognising the role of employment as a wider determinant of health, mental wellbeing, financial resilience and life chances.</p>	Deputy Leader	October 2023
R011	<p>Tracking Council agrees that the Executive Member reports on progress towards achievement of these recommendations no later than October 2023. Subsequent progress reports will be scheduled by the Committee thereafter, until all recommendations are implemented.</p>	Deputy Leader	October 2023



Appendix 1: Breaking Down Barriers Report – Recommendations

Actions in response to Breaking Down the Barriers Recommendations (from November - Economy and Skills OSC Committee Report)

Implementation of recommendations from Breaking Down the Barriers Report

Recommendation	Current work programme
<p>1. Reduce the cost of public transport for 16 - 18-year-olds.</p>	<p>Travel to Succeed initiative being developed giving free travel passes to 850 young people who are NEET or at risk of NEET. Also a contribution to Cost of Living response. To be rolled out from January 2023. This will build on the current Youth Promise Plus funded free bus tickets for NEET project participants aged 16-29. Funding for the latter due to finish in October 2023.</p>
<p>2. Support young people's mental health.</p>	<p>A variety of initiatives are being progressed. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with providers to provide better access to support • Developing a pilot of supported internships across the Council focused on young people with SEND. • As part of CWG, a group of young people acted as grant providers, distributing £50k to projects to support young people • Reps from Youth City Board involved in Public Health Forum to create a Mentally Healthy City • Young people representatives (3) are members of Suicide Prevention Advisory Board • Range of workshops for young people focused on mental health and well being delivered through our youth service • 2 youth workers trained as mental health first aiders and suicide first responders • 1500 well being packs for young people distributed throughout the city in the last 3 years.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90 young people referred to mental health NHS support via Better Pathways <p>The focus for next year will be to embed this work and feed it into wider corporate initiatives.</p>
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Recommendation	Current work programme
<p>3. Support young people to build confidence and resilience.</p>	<p>A post-16 forum has been established to help share good practice and networking. Through our adult education offer we have provided additional support for learner with additional needs. Our careers service has continued to work with young people aged over 16 and building confidence and resilience is key to our delivery of our youth offer.</p> <p>Examples of this work delivered by BYS include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basketball Skills Development Programme @ The Lighthouse • Young Leaders Training • Volunteering opportunities for young people • T-Shirt Printing workshop @ The Vibe • Sound Choices – music project for young men around positive health options @ The Factory • The resurgence of Girls Groups – giving young women a safe space to develop their social and emotional well being inc setting up an Young Women's IAG for WMP. • Working in partnership with other organisations e.g. Safe Schools, VRP, WMP, EmpowerU to work with individuals around building up their resilience's to stay safe. <p>Youth Promise Plus has supported over 16,000 young people since 2016 and has supported over 4500 into positive outcomes, with many more gaining confidence and resilience through the support.</p>



<p>4. Develop a comprehensive city-wide mentoring scheme.</p>	<p>This area has not progressed as much as we would like due to a focus on jobs, training and work experience. Some mentoring has been delivered as part of the Transformation 4 Change Programme and Youth Promise Plus. However this will be a priority for next year.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Current work programme</p>
<p>5. Facilitate accessible work experience opportunities.</p>	<p>We continue to pursue a range of accessible work experience opportunities both within and outside the Council. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with employees to become more disability confident. • Offering work experience opportunities for young people within a school and college setting – e.g. The Factory have linked with Halesowen college to support work experience for SEND young people. • Offering young people opportunities to take part in the interview process. • Two Kickstart placements • Long term unemployed young people volunteering opportunities (Factory) in collaboration with DWP. <p>Our Employment Access Team Built Environment employer relationships generate over 250 work experience opportunities per annum on a rolling basis, and we are working to increase this figure and better target the opportunities in local areas and to the schools that most need it.</p> <p>We are looking to systematise the work experience offer for post school opportunities to ensure young people can access them. This is being developed through a web portal currently being trialled by WMCA, with BCC and South and City College as partners.</p>
<p>6. Develop and implement a city-wide Digital Inclusion Strategy.</p>	<p>The Digital Inclusion Strategy has been developed and is being rolled out across the city including wifi access in our libraries. In addition, through our YPP work young people are signposted to opportunities such as the Prince’s Trust which has a Development Fund that can be accessed when young people are entering employment, education & training to support costs including IT set up.</p>



<p>7. Give young people a voice through the 'Brum Talks Festival'.</p>	<p>Young people are active in the Youth City Board which will help us shape our contribution to the Year of Change for Children and Young People in 2023.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Current work programme</p>
<p>8. Reshape careers advice and guidance services.</p>	<p>Work has started in developing a refreshed careers offer which better meets the needs of young people. This includes working in partnership with BEP and the CEC and the combined authority and the careers service at the University of Birmingham. Our current thinking includes the following:</p> <p>Post 16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of CIAG for all known NEET young people aged 16-18 (up to 24 with additional needs) • Placing service of NEET young people (non ehcp) • Community delivery – BYS, LOB, Community Libraries, Community venues • All young people allocated an individual careers adviser • In person face to face delivery • Digital offer – social media, website, virtual interviews • Youth Promise Plus delivery <p>Pre 16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of a CIAG Traded service for schools who choose BCS as their preferred supplier - range of services dependant on individual school requirements • Delivery of CIAG for Elective Home Educated young people • Delivery of CIAG for teenage parents • Delivery of CIAG for those at risk of neet • Prioritisation of careers advice in Year 9 or earlier



	<p>Partnerships for People and Place is a pilot project supporting 150 young people in East Birmingham and local employers to trail new work experience and mutual mentoring. Delivered by a local organisation, the project also provides 121 mentoring and the impact of the project will be evaluated by UoB, alongside related government departments DfE and DWP, to look to direct earlier employment support more effectively.</p>
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Recommendation	Current work programme
<p>9. Create a ‘one stop shop’ in the form of an online hub.</p>	<p>This work has not progressed and will therefore be a priority for 2023 onwards. However, in order to ensure access to opportunities we continue to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the SEND local offer • Ensure co-location of delivery of services via BYS centres, LoB, community libraries and community venues. • work with WMCA to populate the Birmingham pages of the Youth Employment UK site with information about access to support and events. <p>We are developing a project to invest in the digital project advice needed to progress this recommendation, to be able to take forward this recommendation later in 2023/24.</p>
<p>10. Deliver a locally designed scheme of employment support for young people and businesses.</p>	<p>Our employment support has both supported young people and local businesses. In particular, we are working to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an Employer Disability Confident Brochure • Upskill Birmingham residents by providing free English, Language, Maths and Digital classes. • Reconfigure our employer social value process to have localised job offers with a particular emphasis on care leavers and young people with SEND.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refreshing our approach to apprenticeships across the Council following the successful Kickstart scheme involving 47 young people.• Increase the take up of apprenticeships in the city in general, through working with GBSLEP, The Ladder for Great Birmingham, and the Multicultural Apprenticeship Alliance. This will include development of a matching support service at Library of Birmingham Youth Hub.
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Appendix 2: Terms of Reference

Birmingham Skills Offer: meeting the needs of current and future employment opportunities

Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group

Our key question:	How is the council responding to the Breaking Down the Barriers Report and what is the vision for Life-Long Learning and Skills across the city?
1. How is O&S adding value through this work?	<p>Birmingham has a persistently high unemployment rate and low skills which affects the opportunities for residents and the ability to grow the local economy and attract business to the City.</p> <p>In February 2020, prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, 6.3% of young people aged 18-24 in Birmingham and 6.1% in the West Midlands were unemployed. By March 2021, this had risen to 11.6% in Birmingham and 11.5% in the West Midlands – an increase of over 5%. When we remove economically inactive young people who are not currently seeking employment, such as students, youth unemployment in the city rose to approximately 20% as of April 2021. Almost one in five young people in Birmingham are now out of work - substantially greater than the current UK average of 13.5% for 18 to 24 youth unemployment. (Breaking Down the Barriers)</p> <p>The Scrutiny Inquiry will contribute to policy development through focussing on the recommendations of the Breaking Down the Barriers Report that relate to the skills agenda for young people.</p> <p>Grand Challenges addressed: Unemployment, skills and the economy</p> <p>Corporate Plan Priorities: A city that is Prosperous and Inclusive</p>
2. What needs to be done?	<p>Key questions:</p> <p>The 5 recommendations from the Breaking Down the Barrier Report that are relevant to are relevant to this Scrutiny Inquiry are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support young people to build confidence and resilience • Develop a comprehensive city-wide mentoring scheme • Facilitate accessible work experience opportunities • Reshape careers advice and guidance services • Deliver a locally designed scheme of employment support for young people and businesses <p>The Inquiry will also consider:</p>



How marketing and communication strategies are used to inform disenfranchised young people of the skills and employment opportunities available.

How young people are supported to develop entrepreneurial skills?

The Inquiry may also identify specific sectors where there is a skills gap or groups of young people to consider in greater detail during the inquiry.

Members will also receive evidence on the data on employment and skills and the current arrangement for skills funding for children and young people and the position going forward.

Evidence from:

- Cabinet Members
- Birmingham City Council Skills Team: including data on jobs and skills funding (Committee Meeting November 2022)
- Employers* – identify 2 sectors (based on evidence)
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)*
- Local Enterprise Partnership *
- Business Improvement Districts*
- Trade unions / Trades Council*
- Young People (including SEND and Care Leavers. City Youth Board*, Link with Beat Freaks)
- Schools
- Chamber of Commerce*
- Careers Enterprise Company*
- Small Business Association*
- Higher and further education institutions* (9 Further Education colleges and 5 universities)
- Examples of good practice from other areas*
- Birmingham Education Partnership*
- Young Women’s Trust*
- Prince’s Trust*

*These organisations do not have a statutory duty to contribute to the Scrutiny Inquiry but will be invited to contribute and give evidence.

The WMCA has the devolved power for adult skills but has a separate WMCA Scrutiny Committee that will consider this adult skills. The WMCA work recognises the importance of youth skills and employment and works with regional partners to support this. However, while not scrutinsing the WMCA, it will be important to understand the regional strategic context for the skills agenda in Birmingham.

The Breaking Down the Barriers report includes recommendations regarding reducing the cost of public transport, children and young people’s mental health, digital inclusion, giving a voice to young people through the Brum Talks Festival and creating a one stop shop online hub. These issues are outside the scope of the Scrutiny Inquiry. It is noted that there is a separate Scrutiny Inquiry taking place on children and young people’s mental health.



3. What timescale do we propose to do this in?	Inquiry report to City Council 4 April 2023. It is noted that a response to the recommendations in the Breaking Down the Barriers Report will be provided in December 2022. This will take into account the work being undertaken by the Inquiry and the Inquiry timescales.
4. What outcomes are we looking to achieve?	Reducing unemployment Increasing skills / retraining for better paid jobs Reducing long term unemployment / reducing poverty To consider the funding streams to deliver the skills agenda for young people Including the transition from European Social Fund (ESF) to the UK Prosperity Fund Careers – understanding what careers / job opportunities there will be in the city and how to train for them.
5. What is the best way to achieve these outcomes and what routes will we use?	The Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee has established a Task and Finish Group to undertake this Inquiry. Evidence will be presented to Committee meeting or meetings of the Task and Finish Group.

Member / Officer Leads

Lead Member:	Chair of Task and Finish Group: Cllr. Suleman Deputy Chair of Task and Finish Group: Cllr. Morrall
Members of the Task and Finish Group	Cllrs: Suleman, Aziz, Morrall, Brennan, Knowles
Lead Officer:	Fiona Bottrill. Senior Overview and Scrutiny Manager.



Appendix 3: Be Heard Consultation responses

The Council's Be Heard Consultation Database was used to gather public views during the period 30th November 2022 to 30th January 2023. The following responses were received.

Total Number of Responses received = **13**

Individual/ Organisation

6 from individuals

7 from organisations

1 response if from an Elected Member.

Gender

7 of the participants were **male**.

6 of the participants were **female**.

No responses were from those who considered themselves to have a **disability**.

Response by Age Group

20-24	25-29	30 - 34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64
1	1	2	4	1	1	2	1	1

Response by Ethnic Group

7 responses from those who identified as **White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British**

2 responses from those who identified as **Asian/Asian British**

2 responses from those who identified as **Mixed/multiple ethnic groups**

1 identified as **Other White background**

1 response **preferred not to say**

Sexual Orientation

10 responders identified as **Heterosexual or Straight**

2 responders **preferred not to say**

1 responder identified as **gay/lesbian**

One additional written contribution was received from an organisation.



Appendix 4: List of Contributors

The Committee Members would like to extend their thanks to all those who contributed to the Inquiry:

Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership

Birmingham Children's Trust

Birmingham City University

Birmingham Education Partnership

Birmingham Race Impact Partnership

Councillor Brigid Jones, Deputy Leader, Birmingham City Council

Councillor Karen McCarthy, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families

Life-Long Learning and Employability, Birmingham City Council

Newman University

Prince's Trust

University College Birmingham

University of Birmingham

Witton Lodge Community Association

Youth Service, Birmingham City Council

Young People engaging with the Youth Service

Youth City Board



Appendix 5: References

- Birmingham City Council Corporate Plan 2022 – 2026 [Council Plan and Budget | Birmingham City Council](#)
- Breaking Down Barriers (2021) ([Breaking down barriers: working towards Birmingham’s future supporting younger people into employment | Birmingham City Council](#))
- City-REDI/ WMREDI Universities and Regions Forum Policy Briefing December 2022 ([Mobilising the Power of Universities in Levelling-Up: A new Universities and Regions Policy Forum – City REDI Blog \(bham.ac.uk\)](#))
- Local Skills Improvement Plans, Statutory Guidance for the Development of a Local Skills Improvement Plan October 2022 ([Local skills improvement plans - statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#))
- Scrutiny Inquiry, Closing the Skills Gap (2012) [Closing the Skills Gap Scrutiny Report December 2012 | Birmingham City Council](#)
- Princes Trust Nat West Youth Index Survey 2022 [One in four young people say they will never recover from the emotional impact of the pandemic, as confidence falls to an all time low warns Prince's Trust | News and views | About The Trust | The Prince's Trust \(princes-trust.org.uk\)](#)
- Reports to Economy and Skills OSC: 12 October 2022, 9 November 2022, 7 December 2022, 11 January 2022 [CMIS > Committee > Overview and Scrutiny > Economy and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#)
- University of Birmingham [Autism Centre for Education and Research](#)