

Torry Neighbourhood Audit



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Investing in a Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Future

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Executive Summary

This Report is one in a series of five Neighbourhood Audit Reports commissioned by Aberdeen City Council through the Progress Through Positive Partnerships project, which will also be followed by an overall report on the combined findings.

The Audits were carried out in mid-2017 across regeneration areas of Aberdeen by a team of independent canvassers who maintained impartiality throughout the process.

This is the fourth report in a series of five, covering the Torry area, which was carried out in 2017 over a three week period and covered topics such as length of unemployment, barriers to returning to employment and qualifications held, as well as willingness to re-train and the support people would benefit from to improve employability and find work.

A little under half of all respondents were not working. Of these not in employment, just over three quarters had been unemployed for over six months and over half for over 2 years.

Perhaps as a result of the length of unemployment faced, a fifth of respondents stated that a loss of benefit security was barrier to returning to employment for them. Alongside this, benefit uptake, for both employed and unemployed, was worryingly low, with just over a tenth in receipt of Tax Credits and less than a tenth in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance, despite wages being received being well below average and the numbers stating they were unemployed.

Over three quarters of respondents were willing to re-train to improve their skills, with realistic expectations of the funding or wage they could receive while doing so.

Over three quarters of respondents went on to further or higher education after school, although it was noted that respondents often did not gain employment relating to their qualifications, with less than half not doing so.

Two thirds of respondents also reported that they are available for work or training, with around a tenth reporting that they felt that people in the area require more locally available help and training.

It is therefore recommended that awareness of existing and/or new local support and training is raised so that the different routes back into employment which are available are highlighted, ensuring that people are connected to the jobs they are seeking and receive appropriate financial support where available, whether towards the cost of training or in-work benefits.

Introduction

Background

Aberdeen City Council successfully bid for European Structural Fund funding for the “Progress Through Positive Partnerships” project. As part of this successful bid a series of Neighbourhood Audits were to be carried out, designed to identify the current needs of local people in five regeneration areas of the city – Middlefield, Woodside, Tillydrone, Torry and Seaton.

Pathways was commissioned through competitive tendering by Aberdeen City Council through the European Structural Fund (ESF) to carry out a series of 5 Neighbourhood Audits of the area identifying what services local people wanted, key barriers to an improved lifestyle, individual aspirations, and future service provision requirements, with the aim of thereby identifying what services were required.

An important aspect of the Audit was also to identify what services local people were aware of locally and whether new and existing services could be better targeted.

The Audit was carried out in July and August 2017, with the results then entered into a database for analysis.

Citywide Comparison

In identifying the need to direct services towards regeneration areas such as Torry, it is important to set the challenges faced by the area into context. The latest published NOMIS figures show the following key benefit claim figures in the Torry/ Ferryhill ward which covers Torry and across the city as a whole:

	Torry	Aberdeen City
Jobseekers Allowance	265	2 480
Employment & Support Allowance	410	8 455
Incapacity Benefit/ Severe Disability All.	20	270
Disability Living Allowance	190	7 800

Source: NOMIS June 2017

The figures above show that there are significant numbers of residents in the Torry area in receipt of benefits, highlighting the importance of addressing the needs of the area through the provision of services which support people to enter or return to work.

Torry

Demographic

The Torry area itself has a total estimated population of 8 129. Of these, it is estimated that 5 172 (63.6%) are of working age.

The working age population of the area represents approximately 3.2% of the working age population of Aberdeen City.

The percentage of the area which is over working age in Torry is 14.9%, the same as the average across Aberdeen city.

Torry also has a significant young population, with 21.4% of residents aged under 16, highlighting the importance of having systems in place to support people of all ages, from school leaver upwards into employment.

Aberdeen City Council Population Estimates 2015

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

Torry is covered by 13 datazones in the SIMD. Unfortunately, the datazones across the country have recently been revised, with the latest figures the first available under these revisions, so, it is therefore not possible to carry out comparisons with previous SIMD figures to identify any trends.

However, analysis of the latest 2016 figures shows the datazones had the following rankings out of the 6505 datazones in Scotland:

Datazone	Employment	Income	Health	Housing	Education
SO1006624	2991	3506	2916	160	1789
SO1006625	3480	3829	3315	1674	2814
SO1006626	2353	2157	1779	684	802
SO1006627	1733	2355	1089	84	424
SO1006628	3187	3776	3287	45	1750
SO1006629	2336	1196	1361	902	291
SO1006630	2149	1385	1381	1174	776
SO1006631	2631	1532	1657	795	816
SO1006632	1582	1953	1384	759	232
SO1006633	1651	1283	1354	731	401
SO1006634	556	583	876	1070	425
SO1006635	2601	2064	3014	731	808
SO1006636	1497	675	959	983	270

Rankings shown in the table above are based on the total number of SIMD datazones across the country (6505), with lower numbers representing an area ranks lower and therefore worse than a datazone ranked more highly.

These figures therefore show that Torry consistently ranks below the median level for deprivation across the country, with three SIMD datazones for Employment and six Income ranking in the worst 25%.

Also of particular concern is that six datazones rank within the worst 5% for Education and all but two in the worst 25%.

Health & Housing

As shown by the Department of Work & Pension (DWP) figures claiming illness-related benefits, there is a significant number of people with limiting long term illnesses across all age ranges. This is further reflected in the SIMD outcomes, which show 2 of the Torry datazones to be in the worst 15% ranking for Health in the country and all thirteen datazones ranking in the lowest 20% for Housing, with the subsequent health impacts this can have.

These figures are important when considering the efforts being made nationally to reduce the numbers of people on illness related benefits and encourage them back into work, such as through the Welfare Reform programme.

Neighbourhood Audit

The information above highlights the importance of correctly targeting services and funding at regeneration areas of the city to ensure that residents of areas such as Torry are offered the maximum support to enable them to benefit from opportunities to enter or return to work.

A summary of the findings of each section of the questionnaire are presented below, so that Aberdeen City Council and partners can best decide how to target their own services or introduce new services to the area.

Methodology

A questionnaire was developed in partnership with Heather Farquhar and Angela Taylor, Aberdeen City Council, covering a range of topics such as length of unemployment, job goals, re-training etc.

It was planned to deliver the questionnaire through a combination of door-knocking and approaching people using local community centres and projects.

A team of canvassers from across a range of backgrounds was recruited, ensuring neutrality during completion of the questionnaires and canvassing was conducted throughout the day when the majority of those currently disengaged would be at home.

Over a 3 week period, all doors in the area were knocked on a minimum of 3 times to obtain a maximum response rate and ensuring that residents were given as many opportunities as possible to participate in the survey.

As a result of the lower than aimed for response rate in Torry and across other regeneration areas, an online version of the questionnaire was also developed and published on Survey Monkey. This was widely advertised across social media platforms such as Facebook and the City Council's Twitter feed, as well as directly through agencies and projects across the city.

In Torry this resulted in a further 33 responses, although these responses were further limited in that none of the Survey Monkey responders fully completed the questionnaire. However, where questions were completed they have been incorporated into this report.

Those residents in employment, which made up 52% of respondents, were asked questions relating to their employment including hours per week, wages, and whether any benefits were received in the household, as well as their opinion on what services should be provided to help those out of work re-enter the workforce.

Respondents who confirmed they were not working were asked the length of time since they had last worked, hours and wages they would consider, the benefits they receive and their likes or dislikes about their last job, before being asked about the support they felt should be in place to help them find work.

All clients then answered a series of questions on the following topics:

- Benefits
- Willingness to Re-train
- Training & Qualifications
- Goals & Aims
- Support Requested

A total of 158 questionnaires were completed, by 61 males and 86 females (with a further 11 declining to answer). Of those completing the questionnaire 76 were unemployed. The questionnaire was therefore completed by 3% of the working age population of the area.

Findings

i. Employment Status

Just over half (82) of those completing the questionnaire stated they were currently in employment.

Working Hours

Of those in employment, 53% were currently working full time, with 57% of those working (38) also stating that they were happy with the hours they currently worked.

For those stating they were unhappy with their hours the main barriers to changing working hours were children, caring responsibilities and money.

Duration of employment

The majority of people had been in their current job for over 6 months, with 22% having been in their current job under 6 months. At the other end of the spectrum, 42% of people had been in their current job for over 5 years.

A small percentage of people said that they were unhappy in their current job (17%); with the main barriers faced to securing the type of work they wanted being lack of skills or experience and lack of opportunity.

One of the most positive aspects of the survey in relation to employed respondents was that 83% of people stated that they are happy in their current job. This highlights the importance of finding people the kind of work they want, no matter what the skill level of that job may be, indicating that once in suitable employment respondents were largely committed to remaining there.

Employment sector

Two thirds (41%) work in the Service sector, with the remainder spread across a number of sectors, although a similar percentage (39%) answered this question as "Other", so the real percentage working in Services may be higher, especially as the only other sector which had a notable answer was Public Administration at just over 10%.

Wages

The weekly wage stated as received was well below the city average. Of the 66 people in employment responding to this question, only 30% stated that their income exceeded £300 per week, in itself well below the city average.

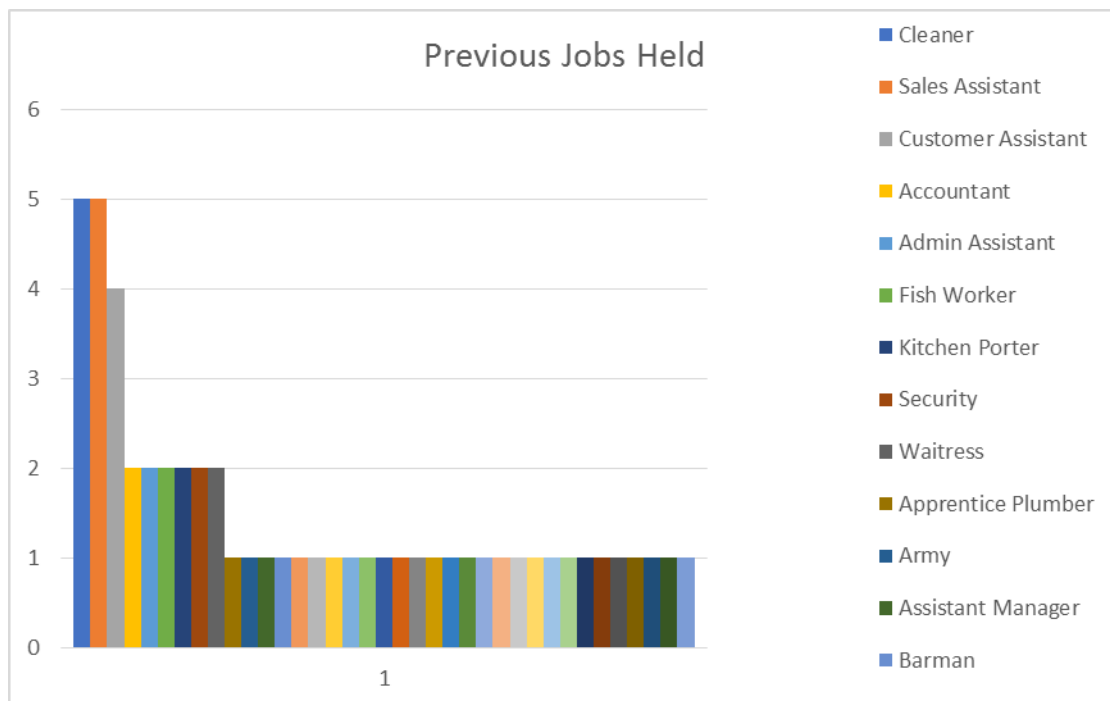
However, as only 11 people stated that they were in receipt of in-work benefits, this suggests that there may be a lack of understanding and knowledge of eligibility for in-work benefits and there may therefore be a need

to advertise and encourage uptake of these benefits within the area, perhaps through organisations such as Cash In Your Pocket or a neighbourhood DWP event.

ii. Unemployment

A total of 76 unemployed residents completed the questionnaire, approximately 48% of the total completed. Of those answering, 93% had previously worked, with three quarters (75%) having worked full time.

A wide range of jobs had previously been held, ranging from lower skilled jobs, such as labourer and domestic cleaner, to highly skilled jobs such as engineer and two accountants. However, the vast majority of jobs previously held were lower skilled.



The main reasons given by respondents when asked what they did not like about their previous job were hours and shifts worked, the pressure and stress, and lack of prospects.

This is further emphasised by the wages earned, which in common with those currently in employment are well below the average for the city, with less than half – 43% - of those answering earning over £300 per week. However, it should be noted that this question had a very low response rate.

Three quarters of those questioned had previously worked full time (75%). Of all those who had previously worked the main reasons given for the last job ending being illness or had children. This suggests that there are potentially large numbers of Women Returners and Employment Support Allowance

clients living in the area, both of which are priority groups for national initiatives.

Although not as significant a percentage as in other areas, there were still notable numbers of respondents who were long term unemployed:

	Number	%age
Over 6 months	42	65
Over 2 years	29	45
Over 5 years	15	23
Over 10 years	8	12

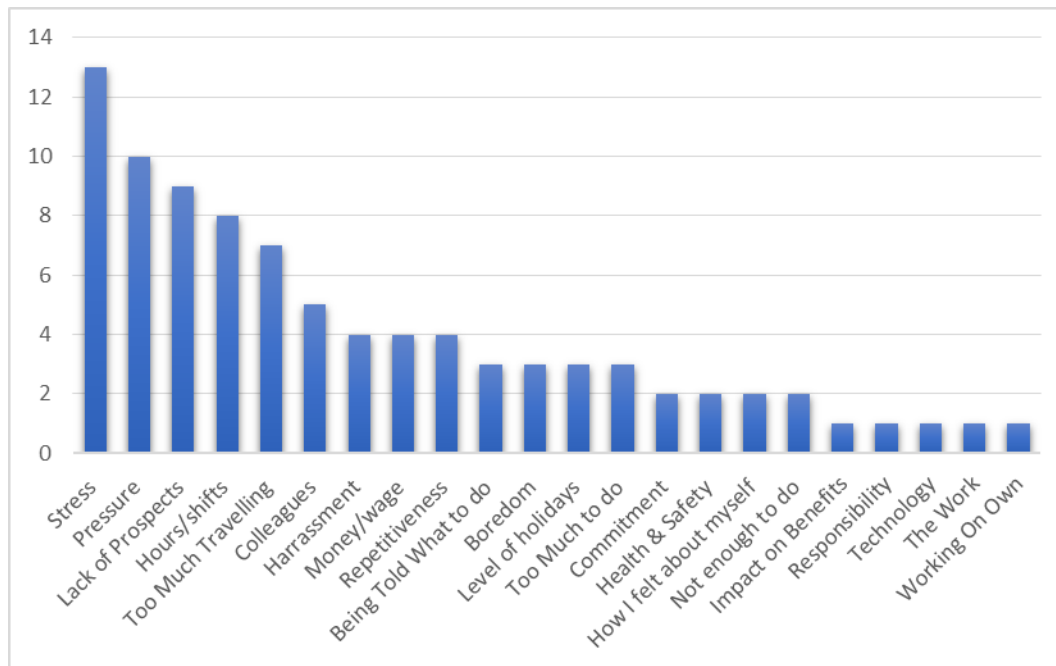
These figures are significant as the length of unemployment faced by these groups is likely to mean that individuals not only face a number of barriers to employment themselves, but that when they are applying for jobs they are competing with people who have been unemployed for much shorter times.

These figures highlight the need for high level support at the early stages of unemployment, as almost a third of unemployed respondents are now over 2 years from economic activity, and without an increased level of support at the early stages there is potential for significant numbers to remain outwith the labour market for extended periods. This will negatively impact on their quality of life and health and also have the potential to impact on relationships.

A range of activities which address this, such as work trials, coaching and key worker support are therefore needed to support this client group back into work, alongside services to address the barriers faced in their day-to-day lives which may include such issues as debt etc.

When asked about what they liked about their last job the most popular answers were Being Part of a Team, Money and the Social Aspect, with Financial Independence and How Good I felt About Myself also featuring as popular answers.

Conversely, people most commonly responded that they did not like hours/shifts, pressure and stress in their last jobs.



The jobs which people in the area were looking for ranged from lower skilled work, such as cleaner and bar worker, to skilled work such as an engineer, nurse two accountants and a motor mechanic.

In considering the work they would like to do, the most common steps needed were Done it Before, Gain Qualifications, Update CV, and Work Experience/Placements. However, just 1% identified literacy or numeracy needs as a barrier to securing the work they wanted.

Meanwhile, the biggest concerns about returning to work were the Cost and Availability of Childcare Provision, Time Away from Family, Hours/Shifts Required, and the Money/Wage they would earn.

Although a small number of people responded to a follow-up question asking why these were barriers, a significant proportion of respondents stated they didn't think help was available for them (25%), or that they did not know where to get help (14%). However, the main concerns about returning to work were the loss of benefits if the job did not work out and the loss of benefit security (both 18%).

The most popular reasons for wanting to do the type of work they had identified were Done it Before, Challenge and Have Skills for the Job.

Respondents were asked a number of times throughout the survey, in different ways, to identify the help needed for them to be able to return to employment. Most commonly respondents wanted locally available training, local available help, an increase in affordable childcare and more financial help with starting work.

Significantly, once again respondents stated when asked what wage they required, that they were looking for wages well below the Aberdeen city median of £483, with just over two-fifths (41%) looking for a wage of over £300 per week. This suggests that a large proportion of the group are looking for part time or lower skilled work and it is therefore important to ensure that the availability of such posts is highlighted where possible.

Finally, all unemployed respondents were asked if they had worked full or part time in the past, with the following results:

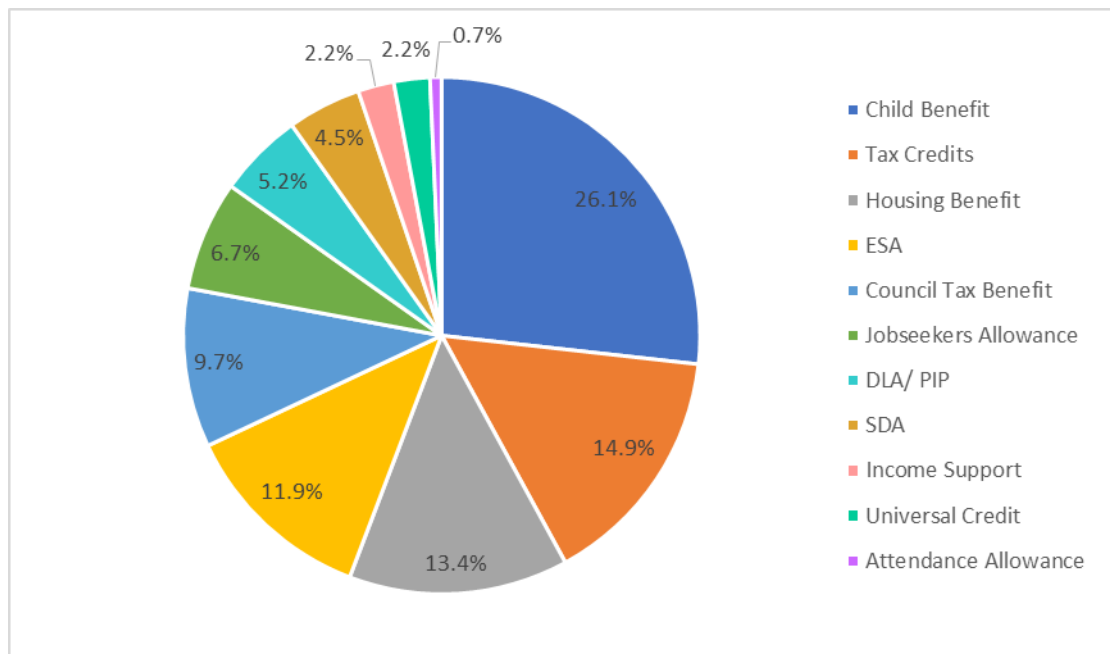
- 49 (75%) of respondents have worked full time;
- 16 (25%) have worked part-time.

iii. Benefits

All respondents were asked about the benefits people in their household were in receipt of.

As expected, the most common responses were Child Benefit (26.1%), Housing Benefit (13.4%) and Tax Credits (14.9%).

However, lower than expected responses were received for most benefits, including respondents stating they were in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance (6.7%) or Employment Support Allowance (11.9%).



Given that almost half of the people completing the questionnaire stated they were unemployed, this demonstrates that a significant percentage of people do not know what benefits they receive.

In the longer term, this may become a significant issue as currently just over 2% stated they are in receipt of Universal Credit. As the transfer over to Universal Credit increases over time there will clearly be work required to ensure that people know what benefits they are entitled to, both whilst out of work and in work.

Finally in this section, people were also asked how many people in their household were in receipt of benefit, with over three quarters (77%) stating that one person received benefits, with the most in one household being two benefit claimants.

iv. Willingness to Re-train

All respondents had the option of completing this section, with 83% responding to at least one question.

Of those who responded, 76% stated that they were willing to re-train for the type of job they are looking for, with 16% willing to re-train for up to 6 weeks, 20% for 6–12 weeks and over half (58%) willing to re-train for 6 months or more.

It is therefore extremely important that not only are there training opportunities available for local people, but also that these training opportunities are accessible and are delivered over varying lengths of time to suit the needs of local people.

When asked how much they would expect to be paid while training, 36% said they would expect to receive their current income, whilst just 6% would train without receiving a wage, although 19% would be willing to receive the National Minimum Wage.

Finally, people were asked where they would expect to find out about training opportunities. The 5 most popular answers were:

- Jobcentre Plus 14%
- Employer 13%
- Social Media 11%
- College/university 8%
- Friends & Family 7%

Taken as a whole, this section highlights the willingness of local people to re-train and that their expectations during retraining are realistic in comparison to what training is available.

It is important that a range of training opportunities is in place to meet the needs of local people. These need to be available over a variety of timescales from short courses lasting up to 6 weeks to longer training offering the opportunity to enter jobs with skills. Ideally, as much on-the-job or practical training should be available to people as possible.

v. Training & Qualifications

This section focussed on the qualifications of people living in the Torry area, whether they went on to college or university and if they gained employment relevant to their qualifications.

Well over three quarters of respondents (85%) achieved at least Standard Grades at school, with almost half (45%) achieving Highers. It should also be noted that 12% of respondents had achieved overseas qualifications, so have clearly moved to Aberdeen since leaving school.

Just under 41% attended college, with a further 29% going to university. Almost three quarters (74%) gained a qualification.

People who went to college and university accessed a wide range of courses, from access courses, through SVQs to degree level courses, with the majority studying at SVQ level or above.

It is also noticeable from the earlier question relating to the job people were currently in that there appears to be a discrepancy between the course attended and whether a job in this sector was secured, with less than half (42%) finding a job relevant to their qualifications.

The survey also asked all respondents to state whether they had attended any training since leaving school or further education.

A little under half (45%) stated that they had attended some form of training. As expected there was a huge range of training accessed, with much of it work-based or led training. However, there was also a range of training accessed which was not on behalf of a workplace. Training accessed included accountancy, electrical, and rigging, giving a demonstration of the breadth of different training accessed.

vi. Goals & Aims

All respondents were asked the questions in this section, although many opted to answer only questions which they felt were of relevance to them.

Of 122 responses, 65% said that they were available for work, training or volunteering.

In further questioning, just a under a quarter (24%) stated they are willing to work or train over 6 hours per day, whilst over half (59%) stated they are willing to attend for up to 4 hours per day, suggesting that part time employment is a preferred option for many.

Meanwhile, 55 people (45% of those answering) also said they would consider self-employment, with more than half of these (54%) saying they would like help developing their ideas, although a slightly lower percentage (49%) said they would need training to become self-employed.

When asked at this stage 83% of people responded to a question asking what kind of help they or others would need to return to employment. The most common answers given were:

- Locally available help 18%
- More training available in city 15%
- More financial help with starting work 14%
- Locally available training 13%
- IT Training support 9%
- Wider availability of work placements 9%

Earlier in the Audit, those who stated they were not working were asked about their concerns about working. A wide range of responses were given, of which the most popular were, Hours/shifts (18%), Stress (15%) and Childcare provision and cost (10%). Interestingly, only 6% highlighted a lack of current skills.

As reported earlier, wage expectations were low, with 59% looking for a wage of under £300 per week. This ties-in with the range of hours per day for which people were looking for work, with a high percentage (76%) looking for less than 6 hours work per day.

Almost 88% of people thought that the wage they were seeking was realistic, suggesting that people recognise that they may not immediately be able to enter highly skilled employment and linking in with earlier answers relating to the type of work sought, which suggested that many would be comfortable with lower skilled employment.

Positively, 67% of those answering stated they would consider volunteering, which can provide an excellent bridge back into employment.

vii. Support Requested

The final section of the questionnaire looked at what help respondents would like to help them find work. A total of 118 people responded to the initial question in this section, of which half stated that they would like help to get into work or training.

A wide range of support was listed for respondents to choose from, with the most common choices as follows:

<i>Financial support towards training courses</i>	<i>17%</i>
<i>Free IT Training</i>	<i>9%</i>
<i>Help with CV's</i>	<i>9%</i>
<i>Work Experience placement</i>	<i>8%</i>
<i>Training for a specific job</i>	<i>7 %</i>

The figures above (and other answers provided) suggest that people are seeking support which does currently exist. The problem which exists at the moment is therefore perhaps in connecting people to the support which is available.

Recommendations

Findings from the report show that, although 65% of the out of work Torry residents completing the Skills Audit are long term unemployed, there remains a wish within the population for support which will help them enter or return to employment.

Based on this willingness and the responses to questions, the following recommendations are made:

1. Ensure people are aware of the existing support available.

A significant number of unemployed people (42%) indicated that they would like additional support to change job or return to work.

Alongside this, residents reported the type of help they are looking for broadly matched the help they believe is available.

Taken together, these results suggest that although residents are aware of some support they do not necessarily know how readily available it is.

It is therefore important that the availability of existing support within the area and city is highlighted. Extensive marketing programmes, through as many different media as possible, should be carried out across the area so that a steady stream of information is brought to the attention of local people.

Such advertising should not rely on a single source as earlier questions show that clients are not aware or would not use all the support agencies or media available for information on training or jobsearch. Advertising could take place through:

- social media
- community newsletters;
- the community radio station;
- through local projects and centres e.g. Old Torry Community Centre, NESCU etc.;
- job and training fairs connecting local people to available opportunities;
- targeted leafleting of Jobcentre Plus clients during signing on.

By marketing the support available through a variety of media consistently over a period time awareness of support will be raised, with an expectation of increased numbers accessing support.

2. Ensure local help and training is available

Throughout the Audit both employed and unemployed people were asked what type of support should be given to people who want to return to work. Locally available help and/or locally available training always featured prominently in the responses, normally as the most popular.

Within the Torry area there are locations, such as the Old Torry Community Centre, where people can access some support, but provision is limited in the area.

Within the city the types of training and support which people are looking for is available through a variety of organisations e.g. Aberdeen Foyer, Pathways, Tullos Training etc. However, when asked about how to address their barriers more than one in ten people (14%) stated that they did not know where to get help and a quarter (25%) said they did not think help was available for them.

This suggests that people are not necessarily aware of the support which is available, backing up the first recommendation that marketing of services is carried out.

3. Ensure the availability of Back-To-Work benefits and In-Work benefit calculations are promoted

The Audit has highlighted that the jobs and wages which people are looking for are well below the average for the city. As a result there is likely to be a need for in-work benefits for residents returning to work.

Alongside this, the number of people reporting receipt of benefits such as Working Tax Credits is lower than may be expected in regeneration areas. In addition, the loss of benefit security (18%) and loss of benefits if the job doesn't work out (also 18%) were both highlighted as major concerns when discussing a return to work. The introduction and roll-out of Universal Credit may offer an opportunity to address this issue if awareness can be raised.

For those not yet on Universal Credit, the entitlement and availability of in work benefits should be highlighted within the community, including alongside the advertising which is undertaken to highlight support services.

In addition, the importance of in-work benefit calculations should be emphasised. By carrying out checks prior to entering employment it would be possible to not only reduce the numbers who may leave work due to ongoing employment struggles, but also would increase the uptake of in-work benefits by those entitled to them.

Agencies such as Cash In Your Pocket which can connect people with organisations able to give in-work benefit calculations are available in the city and their services should be highlighted as part of any support to return to employment.

Residents have also highlighted that childcare and assistance in buying equipment or clothing would be of benefit to them in their efforts to return to work.

Jobcentre funding for training and travel costs is available, but from answers provided is not commonly known of by residents.

It is once again therefore important that the availability of such support services are advertised throughout the area.

4. Ensure different routes into work are available and promoted in an appropriate manner.

The Audit showed that people are looking for a wide variety of support to return to work. Throughout the Audit residents consistently highlighted a wish for more work experience opportunities, as well as availability of training (both locally and in the city) and financial support towards training costs.

As with many of the recommendations above it is therefore important that residents are connected with the opportunities for both which exist within Aberdeen City.

Additionally, almost two thirds of those responding said they would consider voluntary work as a way of developing their skills. Again, it should be highlighted that volunteering opportunities are available in the city, with ACVO's website highlighting over 800 opportunities are currently available.

Work Trials are also available directly through Jobcentre Plus, which can also provide the opportunity for local people to demonstrate their skills on the job without affecting their benefits and Jobcentre Plus also consider work experience placements a worthwhile step back to employment.

These and other similar opportunities are currently available and could be more widely accessed by residents and should therefore be promoted as part of the programme of advertising recommended above to increase uptake.

Next Steps

The Audit has shown a large number of Torry residents are looking for additional support to help them back into work and it is important that this is followed up.

The first step to be taken is therefore to connect all those requesting help in the area with the opportunities which exist with and to follow up through individual contact with all those seeking additional support.

This will be done via the Progress Through Positive Partnerships project.

Further Neighbourhood Audits of the other regeneration areas of the city have also been carried out with reports on each area compiled as they are completed.

Comparisons of the areas will also be carried out to find any variances in the needs between areas, gradually building a picture across the city.

Conclusion

There was a limited response to requests to complete the Audit from Torry. However, those who did complete the questionnaire were willing participants and provided key information.

The questionnaire ran to over 90 questions – although a number of these were missed depending on whether the respondent was working or not - and it may have been expected that its length may have discouraged people from completion of it. However, this was not the case, with those agreeing being extremely willing to complete the form with the assistance of the canvassers.

The main fears for Torry residents in returning to work were the financial implications of moving back into work and the potential loss of benefits if new jobs did not work out. However, the numbers of unemployed people requesting help to find work shows that people are willing to address these barriers and with the right information could be helped to return to work with suitable financial clarity.

The Audit also demonstrated that the help which people seek is available, but that it is not often known by residents that it is available.

The challenge now will be for organisations to meet the needs of the client group, highlighting the availability of all aspects of jobsearch support, through to training and employment opportunities and the benefits and funding available to support those returning to work.