

Seaton Neighbourhood Audit



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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 2017 across regeneration areas of Aberdeen by a team of independent canvassers to maintain impartiality throughout the process.

This is the fifth area report in a series of five, covering the Seaton area, which was carried out over a seven week period in August and September 2017 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.

The Seaton survey was unfortunately characterised by a very low response rate.

Canvassers spent over twice as long door-knocking in this area than in other audit areas, varying the times of day at which they visited addresses where no answer had been. However, this still limited the survey to just 42 responses from across the area.

Further attempts to increase the response rate, through a Survey Monkey online survey over a 10 week period garnered a further 15 responses, of which 10 respondents were in employment.

There was therefore a total of 57 responses to the survey, of which 18 were in employment and therefore 39 not in employment.

These limited responses make it very difficult to draw effective conclusions from the Seaton survey and as a result percentages have not normally been attributed to answers, except where notable numbers have answered a question.

However, it was noted that 72% of those not working were long term unemployed and significantly, of those not in work almost all asked for help to find new employment.

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 areas, 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 late 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 Seaton 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 Seaton *ward and across the city as a whole*:

	Seaton	Aberdeen City
Jobseekers Allowance	105	2 480
Employment & Support Allowance	380	8 455
Incapacity Benefit/ Severe Disability All.	10	270
Disability Living Allowance	280	7 800

Source: NOMIS June 2017

The figures below show that there are significant numbers of residents in the Seaton 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.

Seaton

Demographic

The Seaton area itself has a total estimated population of 5 637. Of these, it is estimated that 4 201 (74.5%) are of working age.

The working age population of the area represents approximately 2.6% of the working age population of Aberdeen City.

The percentage of the area which is over working age in Seaton is 13%, slightly below the citywide average of 14.9%.

Torry also has 12.5% population aged under 16, again below the citywide average of 14.7%.

Aberdeen City Council Population Estimates 2015

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

Seaton is covered by 4 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
SO1006666	1426	1125	752	603	537
SO1006667	994	1627	536	350	145
SO1006668	5704	5399	5399	311	4654
SO1006670	4428	4529	4529	316	2750

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 Seaton is split with 2 datazones below the median level for deprivation across the country, with the other two well above the median. The exception to this in Housing, with the stock ranks consistently lowly across all four datazones.

It should be noted that Seaton lies next to the University of Aberdeen and that this is perhaps the reason for the divisions in education, employment and income.

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 Seaton datazones to be in the worst 15% ranking for Health in the country and all datazones ranking in the lowest 10% for Housing, although the subsequent health impacts this can have is mitigated by the income, employment and education levels in two datazones.

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 even within regeneration areas of the city to ensure that residents of areas such as Seaton are offered the maximum support to enable them to benefit from opportunities to enter or return to work.

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 as the questionnaire was large.

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

Over a 7 week period, all doors in the area were knocked on a minimum of 3 times to obtain a maximum response rate. Due to the low response rate to requests to complete the questionnaire the time spent door-knocking was extended to over twice the period spent in other areas of the city, with repeat visits carried out at different times of day.

Additionally, a Survey Monkey questionnaire was produced, which also garnered a limited response in the area.

Those residents in employment 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 57 questionnaires were completed, by 29 males and 28 females. Of those completing the questionnaire 39 were unemployed. The questionnaire was therefore completed by 1.3% of the working age population of the area.

Within the surveys most questions had very limited responses and this report therefore reflects only those questions from which results can be drawn, although these also have small numbers of responses.

Findings

i. Employment Status

Less than a third (18) of those completing the questionnaire stated they were currently in employment.

Working Hours

Of those in employment, 68% were currently working full time, with 90% of those working also stating that they were happy with the hours they currently worked.

Duration of employment

The majority of people had been in their current job for over 6 months, with over half having been in their jobs for over 2 years.

Wages

There was a small response to the question asking people's current wage, but it was notable from those answering that the spread was greater than in other areas, although almost all (except one person) continued to be paid well below the average city wage.

However, only 6 people stated that they were in receipt of in-work benefits, which 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 39 unemployed residents completed the questionnaire, approximately 68% of the total completed.

A wide range of jobs had previously been held, ranging from lower skilled jobs such as kitchen staff or farm labourer through to a primary school teacher.

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

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 barely one third 33% - earning over £300 per week.'

The majority of those responding previously worked full time (79%). Of all those who had previously worked the main reasons given for the last job ending being Illness or Had Children.

Of particular concern was the length of time which respondents had been unemployed for, with over half (60%) unemployed for over 2 years, which can lead to a number of barriers to employment.

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 common answers were Being Part of a Team, Money, and the Social Aspect, whilst respondents did not like the Stress, Colleagues and Harassment.

The jobs which people in the area were very much in line with previous jobs held, ranging from labouring to teaching.

In considering the work they would like to do, the most common steps respondents felt they needed to take were Build Self-Confidence, Improve Qualifications and Update CV.

Meanwhile, the biggest concerns about returning to work were Money, Stress and Pressure, followed by Cost of Childcare.

The main concerns about returning to work was the Loss of Benefits if the job did not work out, which was a concern for a quarter of respondents.

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

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 more training available in the city, locally available training and locally available help, followed by an increase in affordable childcare, backing up the earlier responses in the audit.

Significantly, once again respondents stated when asked what wage they required, that they were looking for wages well below the Aberdeen city average, although almost two thirds were looking for a wage of over £300 per week.

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

- 76% of respondents have worked full time;
- 24% 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 Housing Benefit., Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Child Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. However, the numbers saying they were in receipt of these benefits was below the numbers of unemployed, demonstrating that people are not aware of all the benefits they are in receipt of.

Given that more than 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 only 1 person 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 all except 6 people stating that one person received benefits, with the most in one household being three benefit claimants.

iv. Willingness to Re-train

All respondents had the option of completing this section, with 80% responding to at least one question.

Of those who responded, the majority were willing to train for over 6 months, whilst 4 people said they were willing to re-train for the type of job they are looking for, for less than 6 weeks.

When asked how much they would expect to be paid while training half responded that they would expect to receive their current income or the National Minimum Wage.

Finally, people were asked where they would expect to find out about training opportunities, with the most common answers:

- Social Media
- Jobcentre Plus
- Employer
- Friends & Family

v. Training & Qualifications

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

Less than a tenth of those responding gained no qualifications at school, with over 40% gaining Highers, while a further 20% of respondents had achieved overseas qualifications, so have clearly moved to Aberdeen since leaving school.

Just over 40% attended college, with a further 40% going to university, with 75% gaining 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. However, only half gained a job related to their qualification.

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

A little over half of respondents 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, ranging from security training to petroleum engineer training.

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.

Just over half of respondents said that they were available for work, training or volunteering, with an even split between those looking for full time or part time hours, with almost all willing to travel throughout the city to find work.

Around a third also said they would consider self-employment, with less than half of these saying they would like help developing their ideas.

When asked at this stage 65% 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 training
- Locally available help
- Increase in affordable childcare
- More training available in city
- Wider availability of work placements
- More financial help with starting work

Positively, almost three quarters 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 29 people answered, choosing from a wide range of support, with the most common choices as follows:

Financial support towards training courses
Work Experience placement
Training through Jobcentre Plus
Training for a specific job
Help with CV's
1-2-1 support to find work

The choices 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

As a result of the low response rate in Seaton it is difficult to make recommendations specifically tailored to the area. However, those questions which were answered by the majority of those completing the survey suggest that the recommendations of other areas are equally relevant to Seaton.

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

A number of unemployed people (23) 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. The Seaton STAR Flat 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 therefore 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. The most popular answers were Locally Available Help and Locally Available Training.

Within the Seaton area there are locations, such as the Seaton STAR Flat, 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, Tullos Training, EC-PC etc. However, when asked about how to address their barriers it was notable that people stated that they did not know where to get help.

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 and loss of benefits if the job doesn't work out were both highlighted as major concerns when discussing a return to work. The introduction and roll-out of Universal Credit can 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, three quarters 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 that a number of Seaton 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 is being 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 Seaton. 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 Seaton 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.