

From: **Derek Murphy, Cabinet Member, Economic Development**
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Environment & Transport**

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet
Committee – 11 January 2023

Subject: **Youth Unemployment and Apprenticeships**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary: This report summarises the most recently published figures for youth unemployment and apprenticeships in Kent. It provides background to an oral presentation that will be made to the Committee.

The report also indicates the division of responsibility for consideration of these issues by the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee and the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee.

Recommendation:

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and presentation and to note that the Cabinet Committee for Children, Young People and Education will be invited to consider the same issues at one of its future meetings.

1. Unemployment statistics

- 1.1 In November 2022, 31,015 people were claiming unemployment benefits in Kent, an increase of 2.5 per cent since October but 22.0 per cent lower than in November 2021. These figures for November are the most recent figures published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) at the time of writing this report. (The ONS derives the data from the number of people claiming either Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit principally for the reason of being unemployed.)
- 1.2 Kent's unemployment rate was 3.2 per cent of the working age population, slightly below the Great Britain rate of 3.7 per cent. Over the past five years, the unemployment rate in Kent has consistently been approximately 0.5 percentage points below the GB average.
- 1.3 Thanet had the highest unemployment rate in Kent at 5.8 per cent. Sevenoaks had the lowest, at 2.0 per cent. Similarly, Thanet had the highest numbers unemployed and Sevenoaks the fewest.
- 1.4 The youth unemployment rate in Kent (people aged 18 to 24 years) was 4.7 per cent. At 8.8 per cent, Thanet had the highest youth unemployment rate in any district in the South East of England. The number of young people unemployed in Thanet was 845; in Sevenoaks, the number was 225.

The table below shows these unemployment figures by district.

Kent Districts	18-24 year claimants	18-24 year claimant rate	25-49 year claimants	25-49 year claimant rate	50-64 year claimants	50-64 year claimant rate
Ashford	450	5.2 %	1,365	3.4 %	535	2.0 %
Canterbury	600	2.3 %	1,675	3.6 %	710	2.4 %
Dartford	360	4.8 %	1,330	3.2 %	435	2.2 %
Dover	465	6.0 %	1,445	4.3 %	640	2.5 %
Folkestone & Hythe	485	6.6 %	1,415	4.4 %	680	2.8 %
Gravesham	480	6.4 %	1,575	4.6 %	580	2.8 %
Maidstone	560	4.8 %	1,830	3.3 %	675	2.0 %
Sevenoaks	225	3.1 %	845	2.4 %	335	1.4 %
Swale	670	5.9 %	1,905	4.1 %	775	2.5 %
Thanet	845	8.8 %	2,680	6.8 %	1,125	3.9 %
Tonbridge & Malling	295	3.3 %	960	2.3 %	410	1.5 %
Tunbridge Wells	250	3.6 %	935	2.5 %	410	1.7 %
Kent Total	5,685	4.7 %	17,960	3.7 %	7,315	2.3 %

2. Apprenticeships

- 2.1 Comparing the figures for apprenticeship starts in Kent in the third quarter of 2022-23 with the third quarter of 2021-22, there was a 15 per cent increase in numbers.
- 2.2 Breaking this down by age group, there was a 28 per cent year on year increase for 16 to 18-year-old young people, a 14 per cent increase for 19- to 24-year-olds and a 9.0 per cent increase for people aged 25 and over. The increase in apprenticeship starts for those in the 16- to 18-year-old group was the first positive increase since 2015-16.

3. KCC sharing the apprenticeship levy

- 3.1 By sharing KCC's apprenticeship levy in 2022-23, a total of 219 extra apprenticeships were started in Kent. The breakdown by skills levels is:

- Levels 2 & 3 158
- Level 4 26
- Level 5 24
- Level 6 5
- Level 7 6

TOTAL 219

- 3.2 More than half (114) were apprenticeships in the field of Adult Social Care.

4. Labour and Skills Shortages: the Kent and Medway Employment Task Force

- 4.1 In 2020, the County Council's Leader, Roger Gough, established the Kent and Medway Employment Task Force to identify and progress actions that would mitigate the extent and impact of both employment shortages and unemployment. Membership of the Task Force includes the Cabinet Members responsible for Economic Development and for Education and Skills, as well as Council Leaders

representing other local authorities in Kent, two members of Parliament, and representatives from education, business and employment support (including the Department for Work and Pensions).

- 4.2 The Task Force meets regularly to identify and assess the most critical issues and problems and to initiate solutions through appropriate action. The actions that fall to the County Council are reported to the relevant Cabinet Committee. In cases where responsibility lies elsewhere, the Task Force seeks to exert influence for reform:
- 4.3 Employers have reported considerable difficulty in recruiting the numbers of staff they need with the right level of skills. This is a national issue and not one which is unique to Kent and Medway. Nonetheless, the Employment Task Force has considered what measures could be implemented to improve the situation in Kent and priority has been given to finding ways of increasing the numbers of apprenticeships in sectors with skills shortages.
- 4.4 The County Council itself plays a significant part in delivering that improvement and the Services involved, The Employment People, KCC Education and KCC Personnel, and KCC Business & Enterprise are represented in the Employment Task Force's discussions through the Reference Group.
- 4.5 As these KCC services report to separate Cabinet Committees, the chairman of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee and the former chairman of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee have suggested that reports relevant to skills and employment should continue to go to both Committees and that the relevant Corporate Directors should continue to co-ordinate these reports.

5. Data Protection and Equalities

- 5.1 GDPR and EqIA considerations are created and reviewed as an integral element of all projects and programmes coming forward relating to skills, youth unemployment and apprenticeships

6. Recommendation:

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and presentation and to note that the Cabinet Committee for Children, Young People and Education will be invited to consider the same issues at one of its future meetings.

Contact details

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