



## **Employment and Skills Outcomes Based Review (OBR) - London Borough of Brent**

*Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network, Policy Prototype Report*

### **Summary:**

Brent Council's Employment and Skills Outcomes Based Review (OBR) project set out to explore residents' challenges in accessing employment and skills opportunities and support delivered by the local authority. Insights from research, stakeholders and community engagement was gathered and utilised to identify the key barriers that residents face and begin to develop prototypes that would support prosperity and stability and thriving communities in the London Borough of Brent. By adopting an Outcomes Based Review approach, Brent Council underwent the exploration phases of Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver.

The decision to conduct an OBR focused on employment and skills for Brent residents came as a result of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2021 Census findings which identified Brent's unemployment rate at 6.8%, compared to 4% regionally and 3.8% nationally.

Regarding education, the 2021 Census found that 7.6% of Brent residents hold no qualification, in comparison to 5.5% regionally and 6.6% nationally. Additionally, insights from a previous Cost-of-Living OBR (2022/23) Community Wellbeing Project identified resident's challenges and their need for specialised skills and employment support services to achieve community resilience and long-term financial stability. As the Community Wellbeing Project developed and transitioned into a new larger location, with increased service provision, the ambition was for the CCIN Policy Prototype funding to support the development of tailored offers at the expanded services, improving opportunities.

By undertaking the OBR framework, Brent Council has used the Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network's governance, values and principles to engage with residents, gain insights and co-produce prototype offers to enhance support for employment and skills opportunities.

### **The Framework:**

The framework adopted to conduct this review was an Outcomes Based Review (OBR) approach which exists as a cross-council and cross-organisation review process, which brings together diverse groups of stakeholders to develop new approaches and solutions to

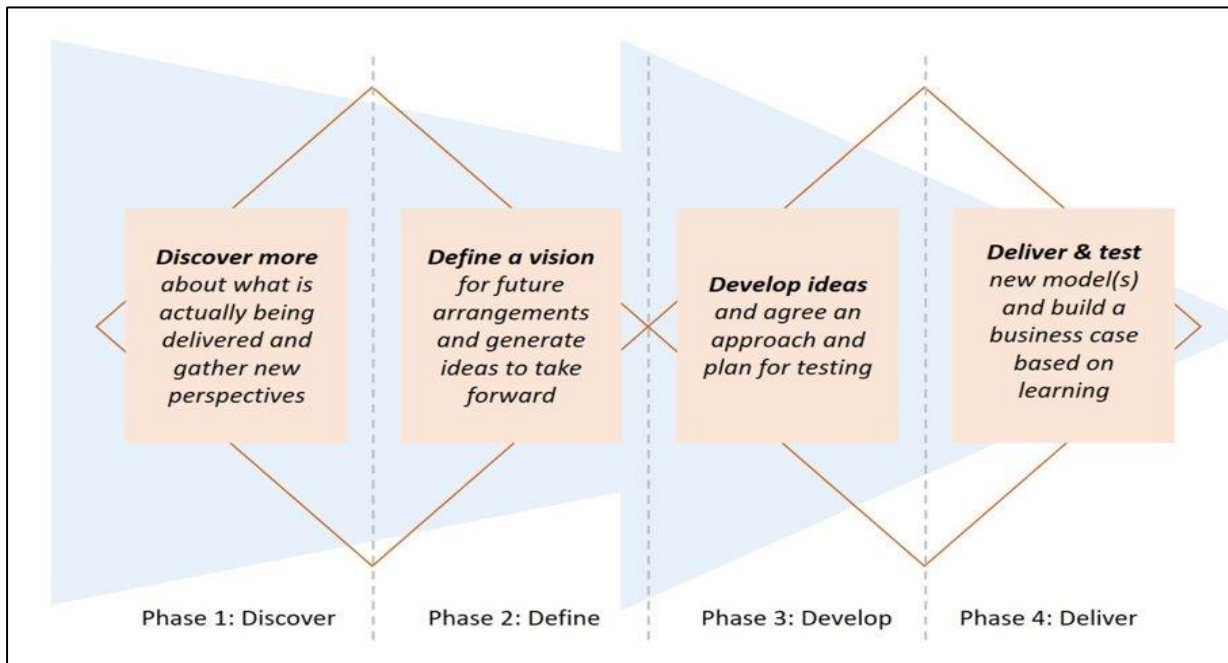
cross-cutting issues. The process enables stakeholders to collaborate using design-led methodologies across four phases: Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver.

Brent Council has previously conducted Outcomes Based Reviews for various community-improvement projects. The benefits of the framework previously identified include improvements to service redesign and delivery, enhanced collaboration and co-production with key stakeholders, and sustainable long-term benefits by tailoring outcomes to community needs.

Aligning the Outcomes Based Review approach to the scope of the Employment and Skills OBR, we aimed to deliver the following during each phase:

- ❖ Discover: develop a detailed understanding of the current Employment and Skills landscape, with a focus on identifying cohorts and communities with skills, qualification and earning disparities and understanding the challenges they may face to upskilling and accessing higher paid employment.
- ❖ Define: synthesising the outputs and findings from Discovery work and collaborating with partners to shape our vision of upskilling and enabling residents to move into higher paid jobs.
- ❖ Develop: co-develop ideas and prototype new solutions in collaboration with key stakeholders, informed by resident insights on the challenges, gaps and access to opportunities.
- ❖ Deliver: testing and implementation of new solutions, including approaches, services and collaborative working.

By following this framework, we were able to develop inclusive and holistic understanding of barriers and explored the improvements required to achieve project outcomes, producing a final prototype pilot service amongst the community.



### **The Proposal:**

#### **Our Aims:**

- To develop a better understanding of the key barriers to accessing employment and skills in Brent through an Outcomes Based Review model.
- To enable residents to better support themselves through employment and continue to upskill to access opportunities.
- To align opportunities emerging from the OBR with ongoing work around the Cost-of-Living programme, working to develop and embed a localities-based approach.

#### **Outcomes to Achieve:**

- Increased understanding of the employment and skills challenges and needs of the Community Wellbeing Project users as part of the Cost-of-Living programme.
- Identify key priority areas and services we should implement to improve and sustain the livelihoods of residents. Test and trial potential new and improved services within Brent – i.e. various skills workshops to meet demand and updated employment advice services and workshops.
- Better inform our OBR process through, understanding needs of residents within discovery, mapping existing services within defining phase, brainstorming the potential of services within the develop phase and producing a final prototype of services within the deliver phase. Contribution to the established Cost-of-Living OBR framework by supporting residents to be more financially resilient, better equipped to deal with

pressures relating to the Cost-of-Living crisis and increasing access to a wide range of support offers

### **Cooperative Councils' Innovation Networks Values and Principles:**

Our approach to the Employment and Skills OBR was guided by the CCIN Values and Principles, as outlined below:

**Co-production:** *we will develop systems that enable citizens to be equal partners in designing and commissioning public services and in determining the use of public resources.*



Co-production

This project supports Co-production by working with residents to understand their needs and enable them to be partners in designing appropriate solutions to suit their needs. When undertaking an OBR framework, community engagement is essential to gain insights and produce a co-productive product to meet community needs. During the OBR process, a series of ethnographic interviews and focus groups with residents were delivered, encouraging their participation and feedback throughout the discovery phase to ensure that prototype development was strongly informed by lived experience and resident needs.

**Enterprise and Social Economy:** *we will promote community-based approaches to economic development that focus on supporting the creation of jobs, social enterprises and other businesses and providing an environment for cooperative and mutual enterprises to thrive.*



Enterprise and  
social economy

To promote a community-based approach throughout the OBR process and particularly at the Visioning Day event, we continuously collaborated with key community partners including representatives from Young Brent Foundation, DWP, Beam, Sufra and many more. This collaboration enabled further insights to map existing services, identify opportunities and co-design solutions, supporting thriving communities and enterprises.

**Maximising Social Value:** *we will support the development of a framework and criteria for social value, giving substance to the concept and supporting Councils with the tools to ensure better local social economic outcomes.*



Maximising  
social value

The research and insights gathered throughout this OBR process will support the Council's wider approach to social value, ensuring that we maximise value and improve local

socioeconomic outcomes. Insights will be shared to ensure that ongoing work to maximise social value is strongly informed by local need and resident experience.

**Social Partnership:** *we will strengthen the cooperative partnership between citizens, communities, enterprises and Councils, based on a shared sense of responsibility for wellbeing and mutual benefit.*



Social Partnership

This project framework has required strong and continuous engagement with internal and external stakeholders to gain insight and strengthen partnerships, demonstrating a shared responsibility to contribute towards improving access to employment and skills opportunities. Undertaking the OBR phases, stakeholder insights and contributions were vital to discovering and defining the problem, identifying opportunities and collaboratively developing and delivering opportunities to strengthen social partnership within the community.

**New Models of Meeting Priority Needs:** *in exploring ways of meeting the priority needs of our communities we will encourage models, such as cooperatives and mutuals, which give greater influence and voice to staff and users in designing and commissioning public services and in determining the use of public resources.*



New models of  
meeting priority  
needs

The Employment and Skills OBR process has tested out new approaches to co-designing public services alongside residents and key stakeholders. Throughout the OBR process, we worked alongside residents to ensure that we had a strong understanding of their lived experience, the barriers they face and the support services they felt they needed to get into work. Through the OBR Visioning Day, we co-produced prototypes alongside community partners, VCS organisations and staff from a wide range of Council and public services.

### **The Action:**

#### **❖ Discovery:**

To discover the problem to address and gain a better understanding of current Employment and Skills landscape and challenges, we utilised analysis of data and communication with internal and external stakeholders. As part of discovery and define phases, we identified key workstreams to address:

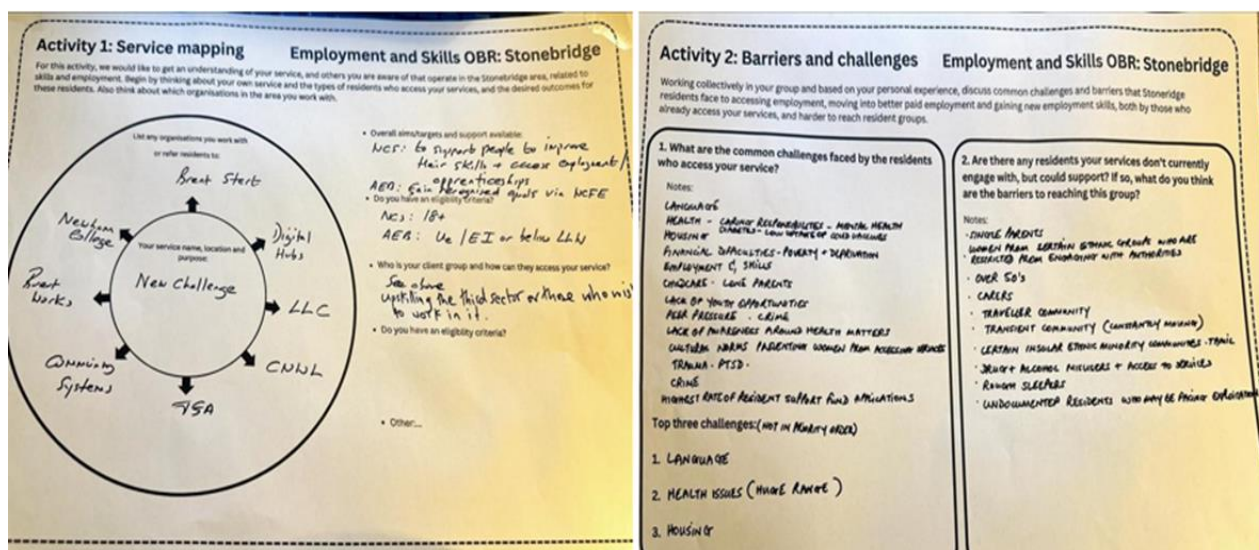
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** Review and analysis of existing data to understand the problem and available information to determine the areas for improvement. Census 2021 data highlighted that unemployment rates in Brent are 6.8%, higher than London (4%) and national (3.8%) averages and Brent has the second lowest household income at 16% below the London average. In addition, 7.6% of Brent's population hold no qualifications, compared to 5.5% in London and 6.6% national average. Exploring

further within Brent, Stonebridge ward residents experienced disparity with a 56% unemployment rate and 20% of residents hold no qualifications. These insights identified an opportunity to address Stonebridge residents' employment and skills needs and opportunities.

- **Community Research and Engagement:** Engaging with residents, professionals, large employers and anchor institutions was essential to gain an in-depth understanding of the needs, barriers and improvement opportunities. We hosted ethnographic interviews and focus groups with residents, workshops with community service providers and anchor institutions in the borough. These insights provided a direct understanding from expert stakeholders and residents, highlighting barrier themes of lack of awareness of opportunities and support available to upskill and gain employments to suit their needs.
- **Horizon Scanning:** Reviewing the success and lessons learned from other local authorities on addressing residents' barriers and solutions in accessing employment and skills opportunities, was an essential part of this framework. We conducted independent research of existing frameworks, to ensure our understanding and consideration of opportunities.
- **Service Mapping:** To ensure sustained strategic oversight, regular OBR Board meetings were established with Senior Leadership Team members across Brent Council. These meetings served as a forum to share project updates and agree on next steps. Additionally, an Employment and Skills-focused event was hosted in Stonebridge, which brought together representatives from a broad spectrum of internal council services and external voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners. This session enabled the identification and mapping of all relevant services operating in the area, while also highlighting common barriers faced by residents in accessing employment and skills support.

#### ❖ **Define:**

With a foundational understanding established during the Discover phase, we looked to explore a deeper perspective of resident's needs, existing support and opportunities. To achieve this, the first phase of ethnographic research with residents was successfully conducted, including the recruitment and engagement of participants from the local community. With key stakeholders, an event was hosted at St Raphael's Estate in Stonebridge Brent, hosting 25 attendees representing a broad spectrum of service areas across Brent Council and partner organisations. This event was focused on collaborative stakeholder engagement to map existing offers, identifying gaps and opportunities. This session facilitated insight and ensured sustained engagement with stakeholders throughout the research process. Examples of workshop activities to encourage ideation is presented as follows:





## Krishnan, 25

**Krishnan is 25 years old and lives in the St Raphael's Estate in Stonebridge, Brent. He lives with his mum, dad and 23-year-old cousin. Krishnan's parents have fully paid off their mortgage. Krishnan lives at home, works and has his own car. Krishnan is a student at the University of Westminster, studying for a BA in Social Work. He is currently studying for his first year and is expected to graduate in 2024. He is currently working as a student ambassador for the University of Westminster. He is also a member of the University of Westminster's Student Union. He is currently studying for his first year and is expected to graduate in 2024. He is currently working as a student ambassador for the University of Westminster. He is also a member of the University of Westminster's Student Union.**

### Stories from residents of St Raphael's Estate

#### Growing up on St Raphael's

Krishnan's father is a teacher and his mother is a nurse. They moved to the estate in 2005. Krishnan was born in 1999. He has two brothers and two sisters. He is currently studying for his first year and is expected to graduate in 2024. He is currently working as a student ambassador for the University of Westminster. He is also a member of the University of Westminster's Student Union.

#### Future, hopes and aspirations

Krishnan's father is a teacher and his mother is a nurse. They moved to the estate in 2005. Krishnan was born in 1999. He has two brothers and two sisters. He is currently studying for his first year and is expected to graduate in 2024. He is currently working as a student ambassador for the University of Westminster. He is also a member of the University of Westminster's Student Union.

### Krishnan's Timeline

1999: Born in St Raphael's Estate, Stonebridge, Brent.

2005: Moved to the estate with his family.

2017: Started at the University of Westminster.

2020: Graduated with a BA in Social Work.

2021: Started working as a student ambassador.

2022: Started working as a student ambassador.

2023: Started working as a student ambassador.

2024: Expected to graduate.

## Nafyssa, 39

**Nafyssa is a mother of four, and has lived in Stonebridge for the last 7 years. She was born and raised in Morocco, and studied and worked there as a nurse until 2016 when she moved to the UK with her husband, whilst 9 months pregnant. Nafyssa's husband is a teacher and his mother is a nurse. They moved to the estate in 2016. Nafyssa was born in 1980. She has two daughters and two sons. She is currently studying for her first year and is expected to graduate in 2024. She is currently working as a student ambassador for the University of Westminster. She is also a member of the University of Westminster's Student Union.**

### Future hopes and aspirations

Nafyssa is eager to further develop her English language skills and has previously received tutoring for her ESOL via application, however since COVID prices have increased. Nafyssa is particularly interested in an opportunity for free or subsidised English language skills, so that she can support her children with their development and pursue a career.

### Nafyssa's Timeline

1980: Born in Morocco.

2016: Moved to the estate with her family.

2017: Started working as a nurse.

2018: Started working as a nurse.

2019: Started working as a nurse.

2020: Started working as a nurse.

2021: Started working as a nurse.

2022: Started working as a nurse.

2023: Started working as a nurse.

2024: Expected to graduate.

# Opportunities

## Upcoming Community Wellbeing Service

A new Community Wellbeing Service, designed to promote independence for residents and enable more sustainable outcomes, is being developed at the New Millennium Day Centre, Roundwood. The offer will consist of various co-located services, including an expanded Community Wellbeing Project...

The current pilot project targets families with children, local to Stonebridge and Harlesden and in receipt of means tested benefits. The new model (the Community Wellbeing Service) will be expanded to be available to all Brent residents; not just families, but also single persons.

Monitoring of outcome indicators has also shown that at the end of their membership, members tend to feel more relaxed and optimistic about the future, more aware of welfare benefits and support services available to them and more financially resilient, amongst others.

This provides a strong foundation to improving their situation in other ways, including through longer-term employment outcomes.

## Park Royal

Park Royal is the site of the largest business park in London.

One of London's primary industrial areas, Park Royal sits across the Boroughs of Brent and Ealing, and is home to over 1,200 businesses that employ over 43,000 people across a range of sectors including food manufacturing, logistics, film and prop houses, car repair and vehicle maintenance.

The Forge Park Royal is a business support, recruitment and upskilling service, connecting local job seekers with opportunities available at Park Royal.

## Green Skills

The Brent Climate Emergency Strategy 2021-2030 commits to creating apprenticeship and training pathways into the green circular economy, such as green construction and retrofitting homes.

Commencing in November 2022, Brent Council partnered with the College of North West London to launch the Green Skills Centre. Based in Willesden, the hub ensures that current and future industry professionals gain up-to-date skills and qualifications sought by employers.

## Flourishing Futures Partnership with Young Brent Foundation

A peer-led research project aspiring to transform the approach to youth employment in Brent and to guide young people towards a more prosperous future.

There will be opportunities to link in emerging prototypes and opportunities for young people with the next steps of the Flourishing Futures project.

# Young People and Employment

## Flourishing Futures

Since June 2022, the Young Brent Foundation, in partnership with Brent Council, have been working on a peer-led research piece into youth employment.

The research has generated invaluable insight into the barriers that young people face in their journey into employment.

The project recruited young people living in Brent, including Stonebridge residents, to lead the research, ensuring that the research was owned by Brent young people.

## Key Insights:

- Pupils from a Black heritage background in Brent achieve lower grades than most neighbouring boroughs, with 78% achieving grade 9-4 in GCSE English and Maths in 2021-22.
- Aspiration, as well as awareness of support mechanisms, can often be a significant barrier for young people to accessing education and employment.
- Census 2021 data shows that more than 1 in 3 of the young people living in Brent who are employed work in the retail or hospitality industries, by far the most common employing industry for this cohort. This was followed by public services (20%).
- Young people, especially those who are entering the workforce for the first time, may not be fully aware of their rights or wage laws applicable to them.
- 80% of young people interviewed were worried about barriers related to ethnicity. Research shows that 70% of young people had experienced some form of workplace discrimination, most commonly when engaging with customers or clients.
- Young people may also have false perceptions of the opportunities available to them. Young people engaged in Flourishing Futures research felt that opportunities at the Park Royal Business Estate were limited to low paid, factory based jobs. In reality, there is a wide range of opportunities, including food manufacturing, logistics and film and prop houses.

## Flourishing futures research shows...

When asked how often starting their own business had been discussed while in education, 47.4% of respondents said never.

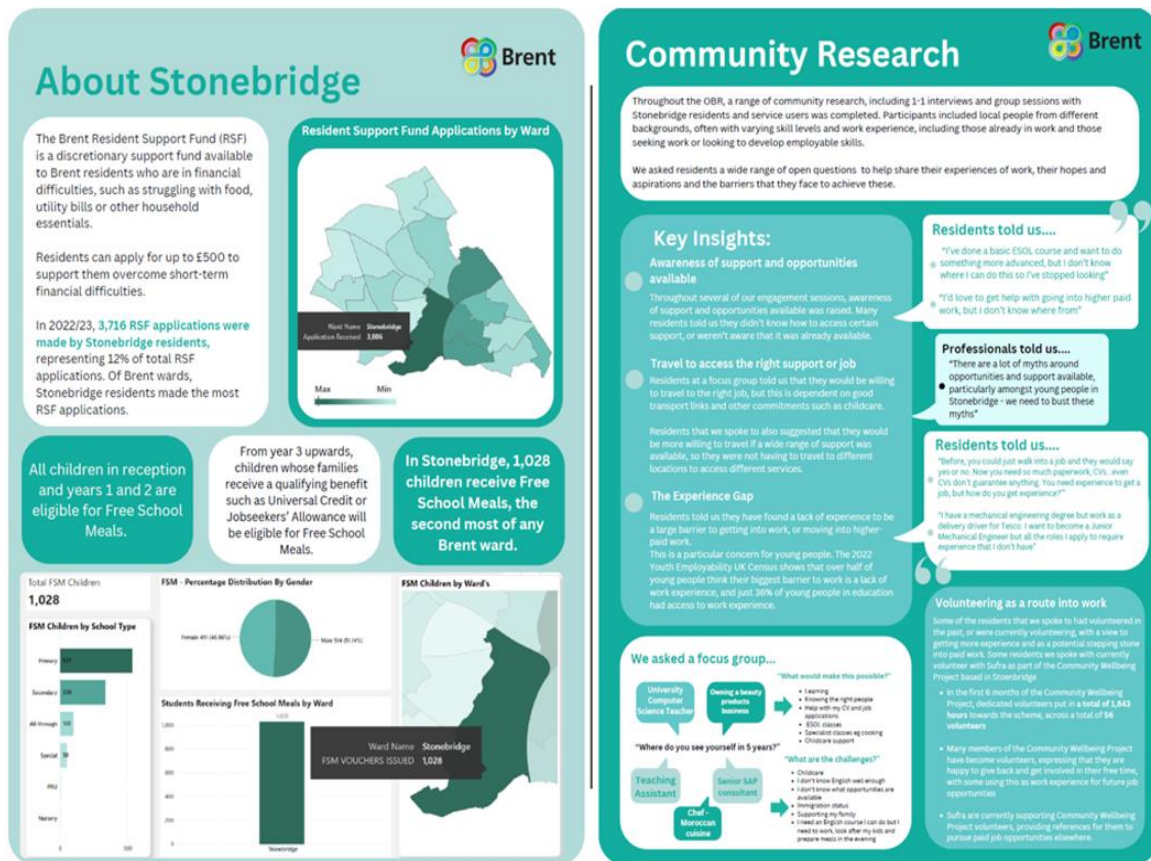
When asked if anyone in education had ever spoken about where to access employment support, 61% of respondents said never.

Professionals said...  
 "It's recurring theme when speaking to young people is the need for joined up employment support and information on what is available."  
 "Existing employment support routes do not adequately lead to sustainable outcomes for young people experiencing long term unemployment."  
 "Access to opportunities and work experience is time consuming for youth organisations and schools - what we hope for is a better facilitation within the borough of links between industries and businesses and youth organisations. There needs to be better local structures to support this."

## Opportunities and next steps...

- Report of the first phase of the work, Young Brent Foundation will be releasing a report on the findings of the research and will be using the findings to inform their work.
- Take the first steps to a collaboration between Brent Council and the Young Brent Foundation to develop a peer-led research project into youth employment.





The event was structured around three collaborative activities, designed to engage attendees in meaningful dialogue. Participants worked in groups to reflect on and share insights from the research, identify potential solutions to the challenges faced by residents, and co-create concept posters outlining possible prototype interventions. This interactive format fostered a shared understanding of the issues and encouraged the development of innovative, community-informed ideas to support employment and skills outcomes in the borough. Summarising the outputs of this session key prototype ideas presented included targeted opportunities for young people with public sector organisations i.e. NHS, increased awareness of childcare provisions and flexible employment, bespoke employment support within Stonebridge as part of the Community Wellbeing Project and improved ESOL offerings. Examples of the collaborative activities and innovative ideas are presented as follows:

16

**EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS**

**OUR CHALLENGE:**  
How might we help local young people achieve their employment and skills aspirations?

We could...  
Inform parents of the opportunities on offer or online / from school made initiatives

How would it work in practice? WITH EASE IF THERE IS APPROPRIATE PUBLICITY AND THE OPPORTUNITIES ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE.

What will be the key challenges?  
Reaching all families, Gaining their trust to use the services

How can we overcome these to make the idea a success?  
BREAK BARRIERS & LANGUAGE BARRIERS AND REACHING OUT ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

We could...  
ensure that they had access to employment support and be educated on starting their own business & have it centralised so all could have access

How would it work in practice?  
A Central point for residents to receive 1-1 support to discuss their goals and career options & also gain tailored support with specific barriers. Will rely on Brent provisions to discuss their projects

What will be the key challenges? ACCESS TO THE OTHER RESOURCES NECESSARY FOR A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME SUCH AS ESOL CLASSES AS MANY ENTREPRENEURS HAVE THAT AS A BARRIER - THAT ALSO ACCESS TO A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF LAW.

How can we overcome these to make the idea a success?  
Develop a support service to help young entrepreneurs to develop their ideas and bring them to market.

**EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS**

**OUR CHALLENGE:**  
How might we help local young people achieve their employment and skills aspirations?

We could...  
Providing Business & opportunities to give them the benefits of business jobs.

How would it work in practice?  
By giving them access to be taken to the best business and digitally

What will be the key challenges?  
Ensuring that services have access to digital devices. Providing training a person in local areas to inform & share information without breaking up on info

How can we overcome these to make the idea a success?  
Connect your person to provide digital devices, will need to develop the system that engages young people

We could...  
Have young people's aspirations to achieve through mentors and role models they identify with.

How would it work in practice?  
Having organisations to provide these services & opportunities with the chance to give them better skill sets.

What will be the key challenges?  
Language availability, awareness of what available on social platforms different cultures

How can we overcome these to make the idea a success?  
Link up service users providers share information to give to their service users.

de

**EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS**

**OUR CHALLENGE:**  
How might we help local young people achieve their employment and skills aspirations?

We could...  
Inform parents of the opportunities on offer for children / from school made initiatives

How would it work in practice? WITH EASE IF THERE IS APPROPRIATE PUBLICITY AND THE OPPORTUNITIES ARE EASILY ACCESSIBLE.

What will be the key challenges?  
Reaching all families, Gaining their trust to use the services.

How can we overcome these to make the idea a success?  
BREAK BARRIERS & LANGUAGE BARRIERS AND REACHING OUT ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

**EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS**

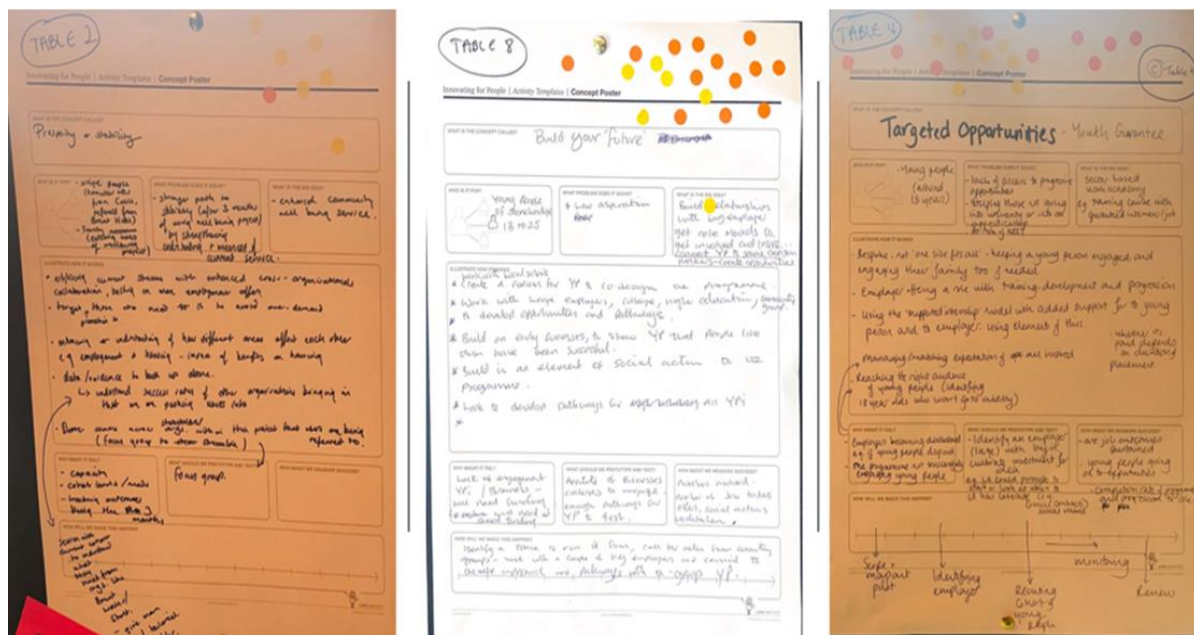
**OUR CHALLENGE:**  
How might we help local young people achieve their employment and skills aspirations?

We could...  
ensure that they had access to employment support and be educated on starting their own business & have it centralised so all could have access

How would it work in practice?  
A Central point for residents to receive 1-1 support to discuss their goals and career options & also gain tailored support with specific barriers. Will rely on Brent provisions to discuss their projects

What will be the key challenges? ACCESS TO THE OTHER RESOURCES NECESSARY FOR A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME SUCH AS ESOL CLASSES AS MANY ENTREPRENEURS HAVE THAT AS A BARRIER - THAT ALSO ACCESS TO A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF LAW.

How can we overcome these to make the idea a success?  
Develop a support service to help young entrepreneurs to develop their ideas and bring them to market.



## ❖ **Deliver:**

Following the Visioning Day, we utilised experts prototype ideas to implement and deliver opportunities for residents. The outputs of this OBR are as follows:

- **Delivery of the Community Wellbeing Service at New Horizons:**

After a successful pilot, the Community Wellbeing Project was procured by the Council as an expanded, longer-term service embedded into the Council's resident support offer, delivered by Sufra NW London. Engagement with Community Wellbeing Project users identified their particularly challenges in accessing employment and skills support, which prevents them from pursuing financial stability. To accommodate the expanded Community Wellbeing Service and expanded employment opportunities arising from the E&S OBR, a new site was identified and refurbished to suit the needs of the members, and the specification of the new service was tailored to enhance the employment support offer. The CWS re-located to the New Horizons Centre where it is co-located with other support provision including family homelessness service, immigration and debt advice and employment services. Co-locating various support provisions within a single community hub, improves access and awareness of opportunities, providing enhanced support for residents to uphold prosperity and stability within Brent, supporting thriving communities.

- **Exploration of collaboration with NWL Health and Social Care:**

Following a strategic review, attention was directed towards strengthening the partnership with the Northwest London (NWL) Health and Social Care Skills Academy.

As a result, an Employment Programme model was finalised, with the intention of piloting the full model by April and refining it based on outcomes and feedback. As part of the initial implementation phase of the NWL Health and Social Care Skills Academy and Brent Council Employment Programme, two key events were organised for residents in the Stonebridge ward. The first, a Preparation for Programme Day, was successfully delivered and aimed to inform prospective candidates about the structure, expectations, and requirements of the programme, as well as the roles of the hub and partner organisations. Nearly thirty eligible residents attended and expressed interest in progressing to the next stage.

The second event, the Selection Day, was designed to assess candidates through a combination of skills assessments, value-based interview questions, and team scenario exercises. A structured scoring system was developed to evaluate readiness: a score of 60% indicated that the candidate required further support; 70% suggested the candidate was nearly ready; and 80% signified that the candidate was ready to proceed to NHS interviews. This approach aimed to ensure a fair and transparent assessment process while identifying tailored support needs for each participant.

### **Impact:**

The New Horizon Centre opened in January 2025 and has since upscaled to a full 5 day per week service aiming to provide enhanced support for residents.

- The membership length is now 6 months, extended from a previous 3 months, to further improve outcomes and work readiness for members accessing the service.
- The Council's education and employment services Brent Start and Brent Works support the scheme, with regular on-site presence, providing support in CV writing, access to courses and training opportunities and additional employment and skills advice.
- The CWS offers a large number of volunteering opportunities and for some, the volunteering is used as work experience for future employment
- Refurbishment of site included creation of a new IT suite for digital skills, classes and other digital and employment opportunities. The training kitchen on site can also be utilised for cooking and hospitality related training.

### **Conclusion:**

Reviewing the Outcomes Based Review framework identified throughout this report, this Employment and Skills OBR project provides valuable insight into the OBR framework and its applicability to service redesign and implementing improvements in community offers.

Reiterating our initial aims and objectives, the OBR framework has ensured an improved understanding of resident's experiences, enhanced support to address their support and resources to overcome challenges, ensuring alignment with the Community Wellbeing Project to encourage prosperity and stability within Brent.

Re-aligning with the Cooperative Councils' Innovation Network's values and principles, this Employment and Skills Outcomes Based Review delivered Co-production, Enterprise and Social Economy, Maximising Social Value, Social Partnership and New Models of Meeting Priority Needs. This demonstrates the Cooperative Councils' Innovation Networks support in defining their values and principles and showing 'cooperative difference' in this project.

Contact: Raabiah Aslam

*Change and Improvement Officer*

Service Reform and Strategy Directorate – Brent Council

[Raabiah.Aslam@brent.gov.uk](mailto:Raabiah.Aslam@brent.gov.uk)