



Aspiring to More

The work/training goals of people facing barriers to employment in Bath & North East Somerset and what holds them back

(April 2009)

Clean Slate Training
& Employment

Jeff Mitchell

CLEAN SLATE TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT

Clean Slate Training & Employment (CSTE) is a social enterprise already providing flexible paid work opportunities in Bath and Bristol. It recruits people who are or have been homeless, those with mental health problems or criminal records, refugees, long-term unemployed people and others facing barriers to mainstream employment (or issues that are seen as barriers).

Individuals are placed on zero hour contracts, like temps, and undertake work for Clean Slate Distribution, which delivers door to door, distributes materials to hotels and tourist destinations, and packs and delivers mass mailings. Temp Workers are paid by the hour, taxed and NI'd, and can choose how many hours they are ready for, enabling them to work around benefit restrictions, health or confidence levels.

Temp Workers undertake regular work appraisals where they plan for the future on the inter-related issues of housing and health, for example, alongside skills development and job goals. CSTE is adapting the facility developed for this survey to administrate this ongoing work to measure 'distance travelled'.

CSTE plans to work with other stakeholders who could use similar research to improve their responses to worklessness and the various other needs of service users. CSTE is innovating a range of ways to gather information in different settings with new customers.

WORKLESSNESS

The term 'worklessness' is often used. The I&DeA (Improvement and Development Agency) defines it as:

"It also includes those who are 'economically inactive'. The economically inactive are 'people of working age who are not working, are not in full-time education or training and are not actively seeking work'. Many are outside the labour market voluntarily – because of family responsibilities or early retirement for example. It can also include those who are out of work due to work limiting illness. [...] Many others want a job and would work if they had the right opportunity, incentive or path back into employment. Such people may be claiming incapacity benefit (IB) or severe disablement allowance (SDA)."

THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For respondent anonymity's sake, the survey did not collate details of agencies that were able to support the survey but our thanks goes out to all that did. We are also very grateful for the support in particular from the following, who helped develop and promote the survey:

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- Silvia Munoz
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- Carole Crouch
- Off the Streets and into Work
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Executive Summary

Bath & North East Somerset council and Clean Slate Training & Employment collaborated on an Aspirations Survey, asking workless people about their hopes and plans around work, the problems they envisage and the ways to overcome them. The findings contribute to the growing debate in the UK on how to tackle worklessness, which is of particular importance during a recession to ensure inequities in communities do not worsen. Locally, findings will inform strategies around independent living and future funding priorities.

KEY FINDINGS

- The majority of individuals (60 per cent) said they were looking for work now or in the future
- Only 8 per cent said they did not plan to find work and this could be for a number of justified reasons including severe disability, mental health or learning difficulty
- Most respondents said making money was the prime motivation for finding work now or in the future
- Respondents listed a range of job choices and preferences changed between now and the future
- Construction, shop work and sales were reported to be of most interest now
- Working in retail or with animals and support work were of interest in the future
- The biggest barrier was perceived to be a lack of jobs in the area despite local regeneration meaning jobs that match people's aspirations are likely to be created
- 38 per cent were worried about how their benefits situation would be affected
- 30 per cent were concerned they wouldn't be able to handle the pressure
- 29 per cent felt finding work would be too big a change
- 24 per cent called for more flexible opportunities
- 21 per cent felt employers might not understand their mental health issues
- Many respondents would like to access training now (49 per cent) or in the future (59 per cent)
- Only 12 per cent said they were not interested in training at all
- The most important things respondents wanted to gain from training were to increase skills (76 per cent) or learn something new (70 per cent)
- Being active was important to 57 per cent of respondents and increasing confidence (56 per cent)
- Training with so-called 'hard' outcomes were valued most highly. 58 per cent wanted training that led to a qualification and 52 per cent said they wanted training directly related to a profession
- By contrast, fewest people were looking for training programmes designed for unemployed people (20 per cent) or that provide organisation skills (24 per cent) or time management (22 per cent)
- 53 per cent reported improved information would help them access opportunities
- 53 per cent wanted help with clothing and equipment, 44 per cent want help with travel costs
- 46 per cent wanted help during the gap between coming off benefits and starting work

A summary of Notes and responses for further consideration are listed on the outside back cover.

Introduction

BACKGROUND

In April 2008, Bath & North East Somerset council (B&NES) became a pathfinder authority whose Supporting People funding was un-ringfenced, allowing it to more broadly support housing-related services. This means that it was well-placed to test out use of Supporting People grant in a more flexible way to address the housing related support needs of a range of residents. The removal of the ringfence has now been made permanent and applied nationally. The Supporting People team acknowledged the correlation between groups catered for in its Independent Living Delivery Plan and those experiencing worklessness and commissioned Clean Slate Training & Employment (CSTE) to undertake an Aspirations Survey to ask people facing barriers to employment about:

- The work and training opportunities they want now and in the future
- The barriers holding them back
- The perceived support and other solutions that would enable them to access employment and increase their level of independence

The findings of this research will help the development of new opportunities in B&NES by informing criteria for any new funding for projects that meet the real needs identified within the report. It will also help agencies that want to tackle worklessness by presenting the priorities as reported by unemployed people themselves.

There is a growing body of (mainly theoretical) interest in worklessness. Central Government, its agencies and the third sector have all increased attention to it in recent months. In brief, the literature includes:

- In his interim report, *Tackling Worklessness*ⁱ, Stephen Houghton argues the economic downturn should not shift attention away from those already furthest from the labour market. He says worklessness must be addressed to ensure inequities between communities do not widen in a recession
- Public Service Agreement 16 (PSA 16) is being given higher prominence among local authorities. It requires local government to increase numbers of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training. It requires that various council departments (eg, social services, economic development) share responsibility for a comprehensive attack on worklessnessⁱⁱ
- *Developing and Delivering the Housing Response to Worklessness for People Experiencing, or At Risk of, Homelessness*ⁱⁱⁱ discusses the role for housing providers, links worklessness issues to PSA targets and says welfare reform "assumes that barriers to work can be overcome for most people"
- Off the Streets and into Work (OSW) in *The Right Deal for Homeless People*^{iv} calls for a range of support for individuals' transition towards employability from engagement to in-work support
- In January 2009, Business in the Community (Business Action on Homelessness) published *Making Work, Work*^v. In it, the New Economics Foundation makes the case for financial support for people coming off benefits, and improved support from the homelessness sector and employers
- The CREATE Consortium add to the debate on the benefits trap, calling for a Community Allowance^{vi}, where claimants would have benefits protected (especially secondary ones such as healthcare, school dinners and housing benefit) if they undertake paid work for community benefit

Making Work, Work and the CREATE Consortium identify tangible solutions if individuals are to overcome worklessness. These go further than the Government directives, which look mostly at the need to create opportunities with individuals or employers, by focussing on institutional and cultural barriers. In particular, they propose action on the benefits trap, something OSW has also engaged with in its WILLOW project^{vii}.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey was supported by a researcher from Bournemouth University who helped devise the questions and utilise the online technology of Survey Monkey, a facility more often associated with commercial market research. This enabled cost-effective data capture and had the capability of providing real-time reports that in turn meant analysis was very efficient. To maximise its potential, the online tool required that the survey was mediated by support staff, which created limitations both in terms of the reliability of some responses and the practicalities of relying on staff and the resources they had to hand. A paper-based survey was circulated, including a large print version, and approximately 25% were returned as hard copies. This generated other limitations such as unclear or more incomplete responses.

CSTE, with B&NES, invited groups affected by worklessness to attend a planning meeting to advise on the survey. We owe many thanks for their input into an important piece of work. The discussion also proved how all the various work and training activities taking place within specialist networks (such as mental health, probation, homelessness, etc) might benefit from linking up in future.

Note 1 B&NES could convene an advisory group to review these findings and work on practical responses, link up the networks, departments and strategies with an interest in helping individuals overcome barriers to work and live more independently, and engage with and inform the UK worklessness agenda

Those who were able to meet as an advisory group acknowledged that what workless individuals identify as aspirations now may change as they grow in confidence and experience success in work or training. As such, questions asked respondents about their short-term and long-term goals. Findings suggest individuals are able to make this distinction from their current point of view however, the advisory group felt that ongoing research would be valuable to determine the realities and trends of people's pathways into the labour market.

Note 2 Ongoing data could be gathered over time, (up to 18 months in settled employment perhaps), to better understand how to support individuals' transitions into employment

A number of agencies did not have the capacity to support the survey (and we owe many thanks to those that were able to prioritise it.) The survey provided those agencies that did engage with the opportunity to discuss work and training, a subject sometimes superseded by day to day crises. The completion deadline was extended to take account of the Christmas and to ensure there was a good size research sample.

To complement this report, CSTE is conducting an Employers Attitudes Survey to test the match between individuals' aspirations for, and perceived barriers to, employment. The summary findings from this further research will be made available as an Addendum as soon as it is available.

ANALYSIS

The data analysis for the Aspirations Survey was relatively straightforward and most questions are illustrated with bar charts for easy comparison of responses. Some commentary has been added, focussing mainly on the factual results. Where relevant, context is included from other research and some general observations have been provided. CSTE acknowledges there is an increasingly large body of work supporting the national worklessness agenda and it is a shame the short space available here cannot comprehensively reflect this.

CSTE felt it was appropriate to present observations, not recommendations, for commissioners and local agencies to reflect on. This report feeds into a debate and does not claim to have all the solutions.

Note 3 A local forum, such as a website, could be set up where networks, agencies and service users can find out more, debate issues and register proposals for responding to the findings in this report

A couple of Survey questions failed to generate a reliable sample from which information could be drawn, causing us to exclude them from this report. Due to the mediated nature of the survey, feedback on the quality of support and advice from agency staff was not deemed reliable. This issue needs to be assessed in other surveys where researchers are used or where respondents can make confidential responses to questions. Respondents were also canvassed about their education but many responses had incomplete information or demonstrated a misunderstanding of the question, suggesting it could have been worded better. As a result, no meaningful conclusions could be drawn about qualification levels of respondents.

Note 4 Further qualitative research may be needed to review the quality of support delivered to workless people on employment and training, where service users can make confidential responses to questions

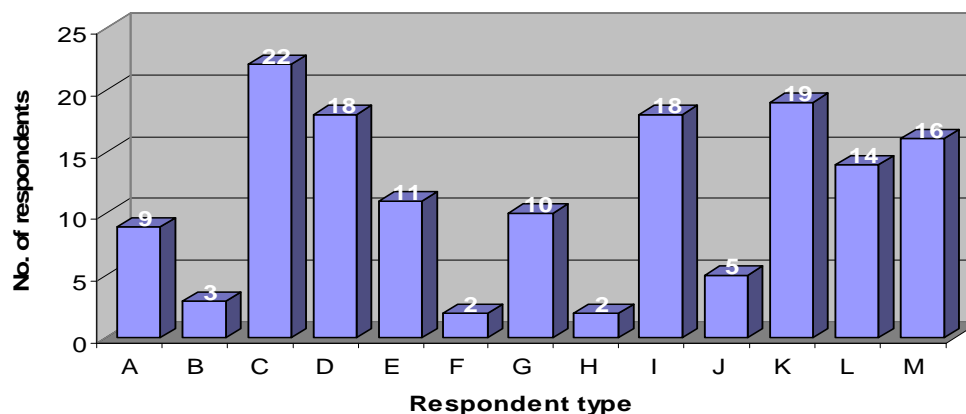
Note 5 Data on service users' educational standards is still required. When collecting this information, the language must be accessible and must allow for a wide range of potential qualification achievements

Aspirations Survey

1 RESPONDENT TYPES

Answered: 110; Skipped: 14

The total number of people who took part in the survey was 124. This represents 15.5% of the 800 services users, (excluding older people) engaged with Supporting People funded agencies operating in B&NES, which was considered a representative sample. There was a good spread of responses from each group.



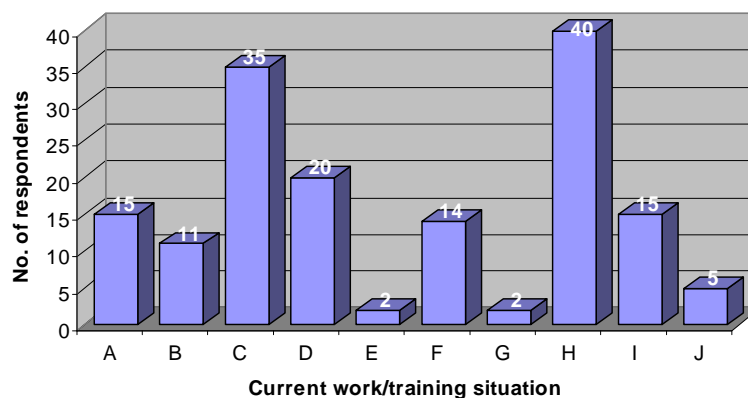
A	Single parent	8.2%	G	Ex-offender	9.0%
B	Parent returning to work	2.7%	H	Care leaver	1.8%
C	Homeless person	20.0%	I	Have needed help with drugs/alc	16.4%
D	Have needed help with mental health problems	16.4%	J	Disabled	4.5%
E	Person with learning difficulties	10.0%	K	Long-term unemployed >3 years	17.3%
F	Refugee	1.8%	L	Sheltered accommodation <25	12.7%
			M	None of the above	14.5%

Many individuals will fit multiple descriptions, for example, many homeless people experience mental ill-health, substance misuse and/or have a history of offending. This is under-represented in the findings. Similarly, although the survey was only accessible to individuals linked into services, 14% said they did not belong to any groups listed. They may feel they no longer consider themselves, say, homeless, so the survey asked if they were in sheltered accommodation, ie, not homeless but in need of housing support. A clearer picture of how many people are in multiple groups would be helpful as research has shown that the more disadvantage an individual has, the further removed from the employment market they are likely to be^{viii}.

2 RESPONDENTS' CURRENT WORK SITUATION

Answered: 124; Skipped: 0

- A Employed part-time
- B Part-time voluntary work
- C Looking for work now
- D Currently training
- E Doing work experience
- F Employed full-time
- G Full-time voluntary work
- H Will be looking for work in future
- I Looking for suitable training
- J Looking for work experience

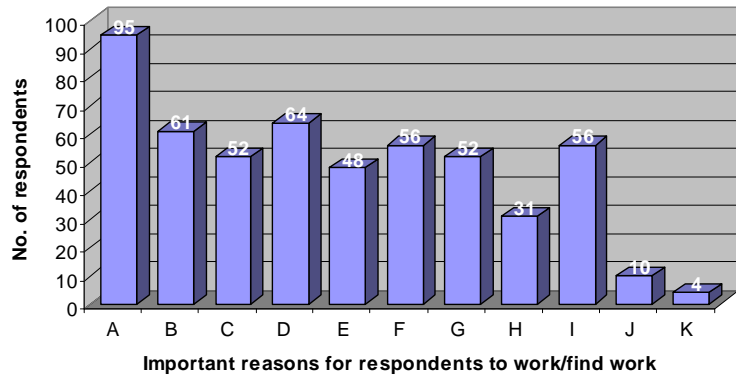


Most individuals (60%) said they were looking for work now or in the future. The question makes the assumption that most people will think about work at some point, so no option was available to declare no intention of finding work. 11% said they are already in full-time employment and 9% were in part-time work.

3 WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN FINDING WORK OR FROM BEING EMPLOYED

Answered: 124; Skipped: 0

- A To make money
- B To be active
- C To increase my confidence
- D To be more independent
- E To learn something new
- F To meet people
- G To feel useful
- H To get a step up
- I To have a routine
- J Not relevant
- K Other



The majority of respondents said making money was the prime motivation for finding work now or in the future. This puts feedback about training and volunteering into context, as for 77% these activities would be a means to an end, not the end in themselves. Only 8% said they did not plan to find work, which could be for a number of justified reasons including severe disability, mental health or learning difficulty.

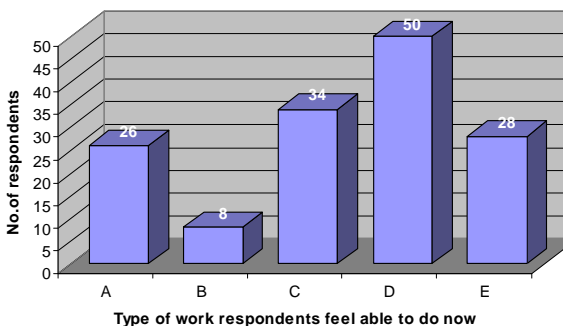
The priority placed on earning money seems obvious but it is an important finding. In January 2009, Business in the Community/Business Action on Homelessness (BAOH) published their report Making Work, Work. One of its key findings was that 'financial rewards [are rarely] the primary motivation'. It reports on work by the New Economics Foundation that argues individuals' 'loss aversion' means people are more concerned about losing out (from benefits) than possibly being better off (through work). That is, they might be expected to prefer to sit tight than consider work as an option. The findings in B&NES are inconsistent with those in Making Work, Work but BAOH also point out that homeless people (and so it is likely perhaps, all workless people) are not well-informed about the impact of a transition into work, especially around finances.

Other responses about why people wanted paid work were evenly spread with being active, useful or in a routine, increasing confidence and independence, social or personal development all scoring 40-50%. Just 25% cited looking for work as the way to get a step up, although this is likely to be true for the majority of interviewees, perhaps indicating a smaller number were thinking beyond the immediate step forward. A few respondents said they wanted to make a difference to others or do something enjoyable.

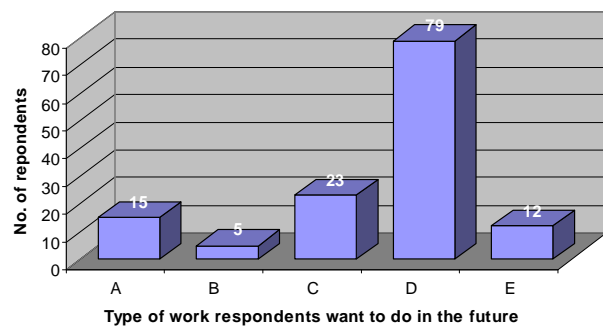
Note 6 Volunteering and training are important but paid work is the main goal and should be a key focus

4/5 TYPES OF WORK WANTED NOW OR IN FUTURE

Answered: 116; Skipped: 8



- A Part time voluntary
- B Full time voluntary
- C Part time paid



- D Full time paid
- E Would not like to/don't feel able to work

It was felt that it was important to try to gauge where people feel they are now and where they want to get to later on. It is the experience of other worklessness projects that individuals' goals may change once they begin to succeed. Their horizons broaden and their self-confidence leads them to consider new opportunities. Sections 4 and 5 demonstrate that individuals were conscious of the need to take a step at a time.

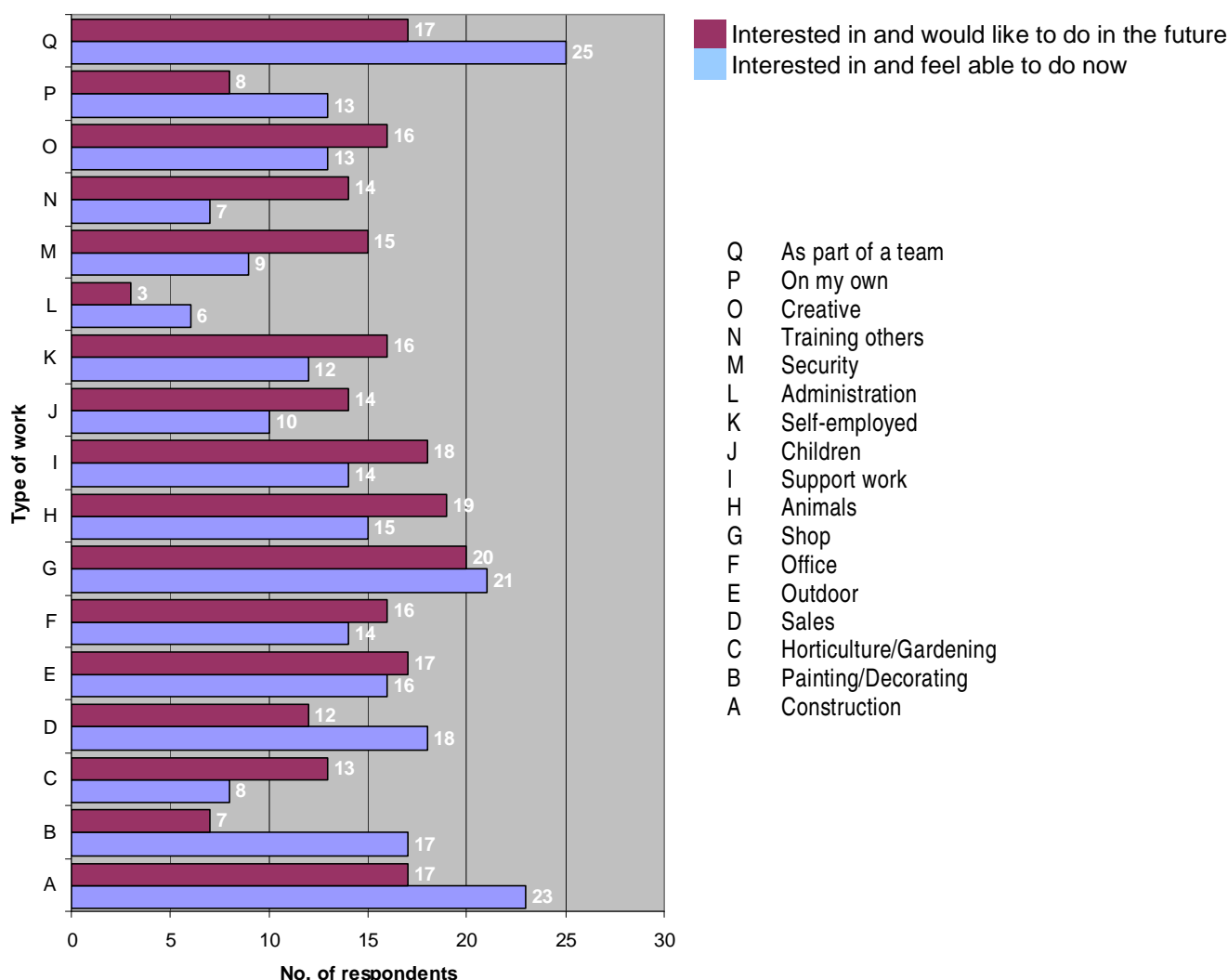
Voluntary work was seen as a viable option now while paid work would be something achievable in the future. Both volunteering and part-time paid work would be considered by 29% now but 17% would consider volunteering and 20% would want part-time work in the long-term.

Unsurprisingly, the percentage of those feeling capable of full-time paid work increased significantly from 43% now to 68% in future. Those feeling unable to work now drops from 24% now to 10% in the future.

See Note 2

6 WORK ASPIRATIONS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Answered: 97; Skipped: 27



It was anticipated that respondents' aspirations will change over time as they progress nearer mainstream employment. Agencies elsewhere in the UK have found people who sign up for construction training, for example, do not necessarily go into construction as a trade. Instead, once they gain a qualification they consider other choices. Responses to this Survey reflected this, where 24% said they would consider construction now but only 18% made it a long-term goal. Similarly, painting and decorating was popular as a current choice for 18% but only for 7% later on.

Other choices appealing more now than in the future were sales (19%), shop work (22%) and administration (6%). The nature of work most people would currently like to do was as part of a team (27%). Each hold less appeal longer term and only shop roles remain popular over time, which is of interest to 22% now and 21% in future. The next most popular choices for now working outdoors (17%) and with animals (16%).

The most popular choices for work in future were shop work (21%), animals (20%), support worker (19%), construction (18%) and security (16%). The nature of that work would preferably be as part of a team (18%), outdoor (18%), and/or creative work (17%).

Note 7 Supporting the majority's responses, training (workshop-based or 'on the job') on working within a team would tackle low self-confidence or anxieties about (re)joining the workplace

Note 8 Training or voluntary placements in trades identified as short-term options, (eg, construction, painting/ decorating, etc), should be supported as a means to engage with people taking first steps out of worklessness

Note 9 Training, volunteering and paid work should be supported in trades identified as long-term aspirations, (eg, retail, animals, support work, etc), including help for employers/enterprises. (**See Notes 10, 16, 18 and 20**)

Note 10 As stated in *Tackling Worklessness*, public sector bodies can provide 'a basic offer to local people in how they recruit and procure services' and by supporting community and social enterprise. It calls on the sector to make temporary work available to "benefit the community, contribute to achieving economic, environmental and social objectives and provide the participants with a clear route towards work or self employment". In B&NES, opportunities for workless people could be created not just through funding, but more sustainably through procurement, contract-based partnerships, and commissioning, such as by giving preference to suppliers (or prioritising funding to organisations) that provide jobs for workless people

7 ISSUES HOLDING PEOPLE BACK FROM FINDING WORK NOW OR IN THE FUTURE

Answered: 97; Skipped: 27

The biggest barrier perceived by survey respondents was that there were not enough jobs in the area. This may require further consideration. A shortage of jobs in general terms might be presumed to be a perception shared with all economically active people in the area. A shortage of *appropriate* jobs may be how this question was interpreted. In the previous question, people said they would look at construction, painting/decorating, shop and sales work at the current time. The reality is that a shortage of these job opportunities is unlikely because Bath city centre is undergoing massive regeneration with construction of a new shopping centre underway. Similar regeneration took place in nearby Bristol 18 months earlier, leading to a huge demand from employers for workers in hospitality, retail, security and tourism.

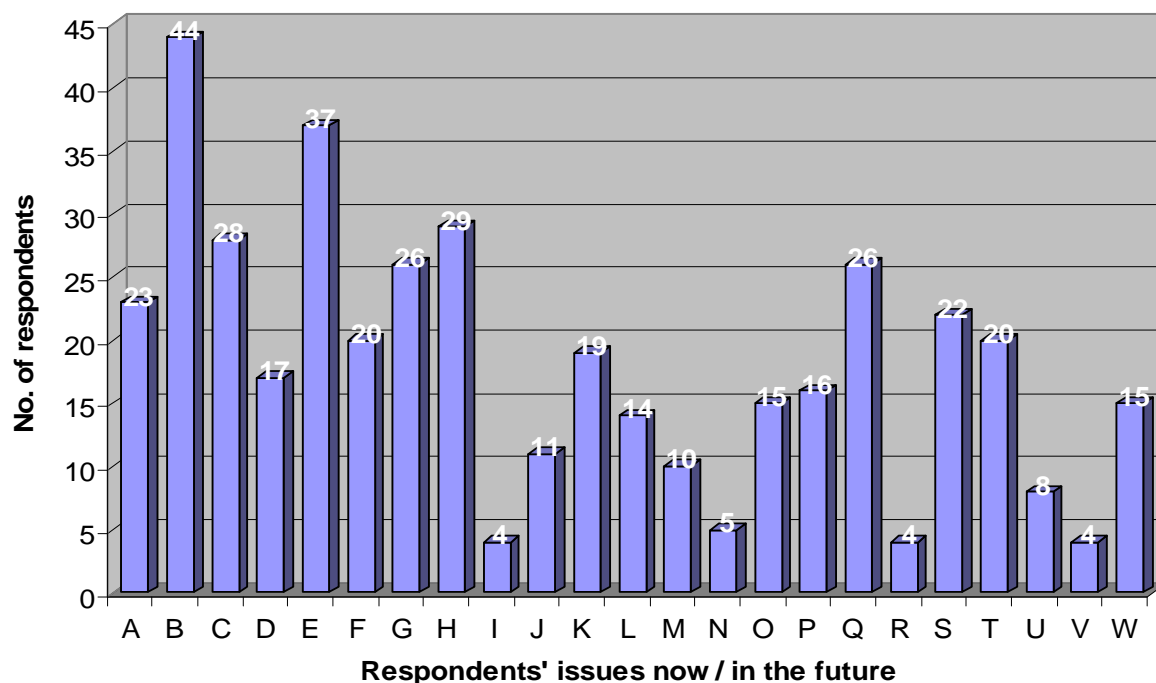
Barriers to employment are perhaps the most important elements the survey aimed to identify. Those chosen least were less practical and perhaps more cultural issues: 'No-one I know thinks work is important' and 'Just not interested in working' was selected by 4%, as was 'I have physical access issues'. Selected by 5% was 'Support staff don't think I'm ready' and this is arguably a cultural issue that should be explored to ensure workers are not acting as gatekeepers to the labour market.

The findings suggest the following areas should be addressed as a priority:

- 38% were worried about their benefits situation
- 30% were concerned they wouldn't be able to handle the pressure
- 29% felt it would be too big a change

There is increasing awareness of the 'benefits trap', where inflexible welfare provision prevents jobseekers from making a transition into employment. In *Making Work, Work, Business in the Community* found:

- Many people are worse off in work than on benefits, especially on minimum wage
- The fear of having to re-apply for benefits if they cannot sustain work puts individuals off trying
- Staff find benefits/tax confusing and struggle to help people navigate the system, so tend to avoid it



- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| A Not enough flexible work opportunities | L Ongoing doctor, hospital appointments or treatment |
| B Not enough jobs in my area | M Don't think I could get organised for work |
| C Think it would be too big a change at the moment | N Support staff say I'm not ready yet |
| D Worried about level of commitment | O I have a criminal record |
| E Worried about effect on benefits | P I don't think employers want me |
| F Mental health issue, employers may not understand | Q I can't afford the travel costs or new clothes |
| G Don't think I have the right skills | R I have physical access support issues |
| H I'm worried there will be too much pressure | S I don't have enough relevant work experience |
| I No one I know thinks work is important | T I don't feel ready for work at the moment |
| J I have childcare issues | U I don't know what is holding me back |
| K I have an alcohol or drug dependency issue | V Just not interested in working |
| | W Other |

Next on the list of barriers to employment were elements that can be addressed without a demand for much creative thinking: 27% said they feared they didn't have the right skills and the same number said they couldn't afford the cost of clothes or travel. 23% said they felt they didn't have enough relevant work experience and again, no radical thinking might be required to respond to this.

The demand for more flexible opportunities (24%) is food for thought. Similarly, the 21% who felt employers might not understand the mental health issues they have. The question is what response could enable employers or new enterprises to respond to these needs? And a second question is raised by the 21% who say they just don't feel ready for work at the moment: What might inspire and engage people so that they might move towards employment?

The remainder of barriers relates to individuals' specific circumstances, such as childcare, health or drug/alcohol issues. Individuals' lack of confidence was also reflected by responses such as the impact of a criminal record or the perception that employers won't want them. Responses offered under 'Other' included pet care issues, feeling older age would be an issue and being at college full-time. Social isolation and adapting to a work culture are factors identified in other research.

Note 11 Link up at sub-regional level to compare how regeneration can benefit workless people

Note 12 Flexible paid or voluntary work experience will help people see whether they can handle the pressure, increasing confidence and sustainably making the transition, step-by-step, at their own pace

Note 13 Increase welfare rights advice – services and materials, and staff training within agencies

Note 14 Third sector agencies should consider staff training and affordable rents for people accessing work

Note 15 Agencies engaging job seekers, those in contact with employers and those supporting workless people need to work together to strengthen the bridge between worklessness and employment

Note 16 Identify and promote grants and other financial help for people accessing employment, so they can afford clothes, equipment and travel expenses before they receive their first pay cheque

Also see Note 1

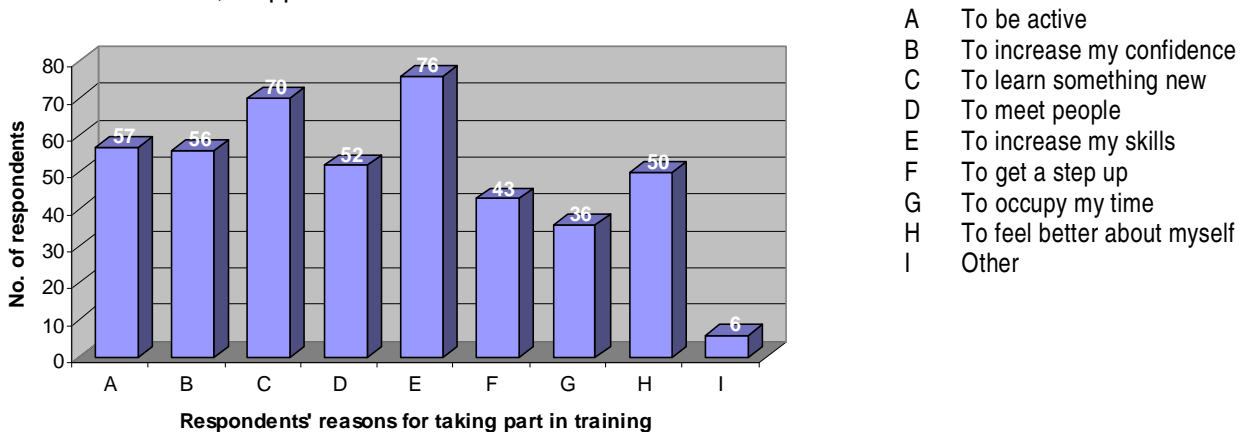
8/9 INTEREST IN TRAINING NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Answered: 105; Skipped: 19

I would like training now	49%	I would like training in future	59%
I am not interested in training	12%	I am not interested in work	6%

It was encouraging that so many respondents said they would like to access training now (49%) or in the future (59%). Only 12% said they were not interested in training at all.

Answered: 100; Skipped: 24



- A To be active
- B To increase my confidence
- C To learn something new
- D To meet people
- E To increase my skills
- F To get a step up
- G To occupy my time
- H To feel better about myself
- I Other

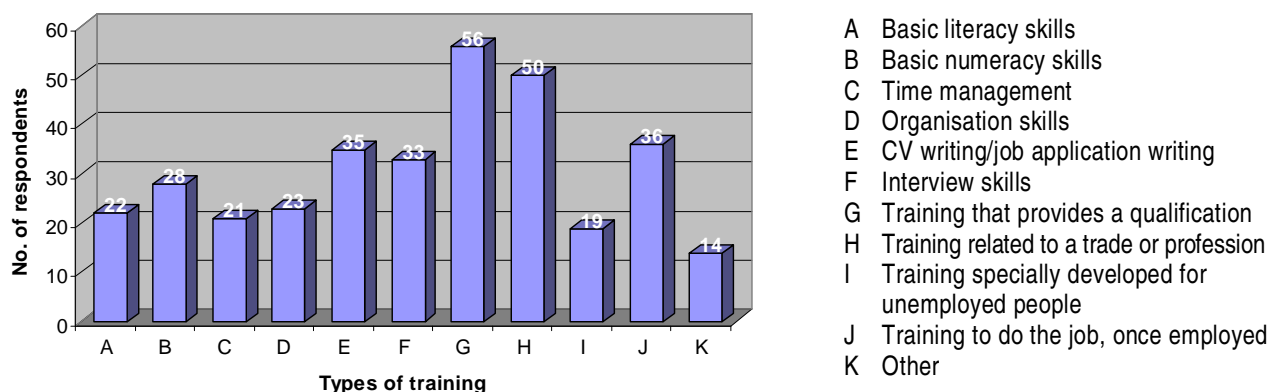
The most important thing respondents wanted to gain from training was to increase skills (76%) or learn something new (70%) and this demonstrates workless people are motivated to gain skills. This may be the same response that might be expected of non-excluded individuals but perhaps less consistent is the importance placed on being active (57% of respondents) and increasing confidence (56%). One in two respondents valued meeting people and feeling better about themselves, reflecting that training was seen as more than just a means to an end – gaining skills and getting into work.

Note 17 A resource promoting skills-based learning, preferably accredited training (see Notes 8 and 9), and highlighting its benefits in terms of employment best fits the training interests of workless people

Note 18 Personal development through workshops and voluntary or paid work placements would help people feel active, engaged and growing in confidence and skills. There could be help for supportive employers

10 TYPES OF TRAINING

Answered: 97; Skipped: 27



Training with so-called 'hard' outcomes was by far the most highly valued. 58% wanted training that led to a qualification while 52% said they wanted training directly related to a profession. By contrast, fewest people were looking for training programmes designed for unemployed people (20%) or that provide organisation skills (24%) or time management (22%). Basic literacy was chosen by only 23%, while numeracy scored 29% – but it is possible these findings are skewed by the fact the survey was not always mediated by support staff and people with limited literacy may have been deterred by paper versions if left to fill them in unaided.

Other responses about training aspirations were more specific: PC repairs, arts and crafts qualifications and labouring. Another asked for ongoing, supportive employment.

Note 19 Training providers and strategic authorities at B&NES and Learning and Skills Council (or its replacement) need to be linked into the worklessness agenda

Note 20 Volunteer networks should be engaged to link up on strategies for tackling worklessness

Note 21 Flexible opportunities (eg, volunteering) and better information about all training and development opportunities would help those who want to engage but are anxious about committing to the process

11 RESPONDENTS' CONCERNS ABOUT TRAINING

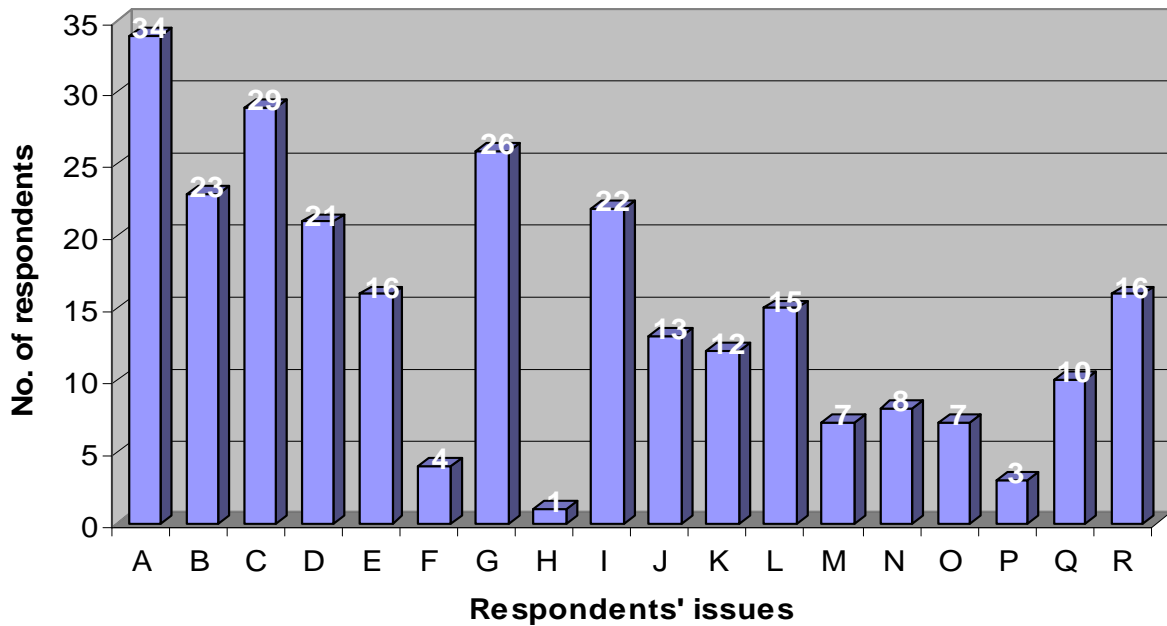
Answered: 98; Skipped: 26

The highest proportion, 35%, of respondents complained they did not know enough about what training was on offer and 16% said they could not find something they wanted to do. The next most important issues, mirroring the findings about individuals' concerns about finding employment, were worries about the effect on benefits (30%) followed by individuals feeling low in confidence (27%). Around 25% were worried about how much commitment they would have to give, unsurprising given some people's backgrounds that are sometimes chaotic or characterised by 'good days and bad days'. A similar number were worried about the practical issues of being able to afford travel costs. Slightly lower down were issues around specific circumstances, such as childcare, mental health or drug/alcohol issues.

Forms of gatekeeping, physical and cultural, are noted as cause for concern, whether issues of physical access (8%) or a lack of encouragement from support staff (7%). The latter may reflect a mismatch between individuals' aspirations, especially as so many saw qualifications and job-related skills as the reason to enrol on training, and support workers who see basic skills as the most realistic next step.

Four per cent said they were not interested in training and three per cent said they could not see the point.

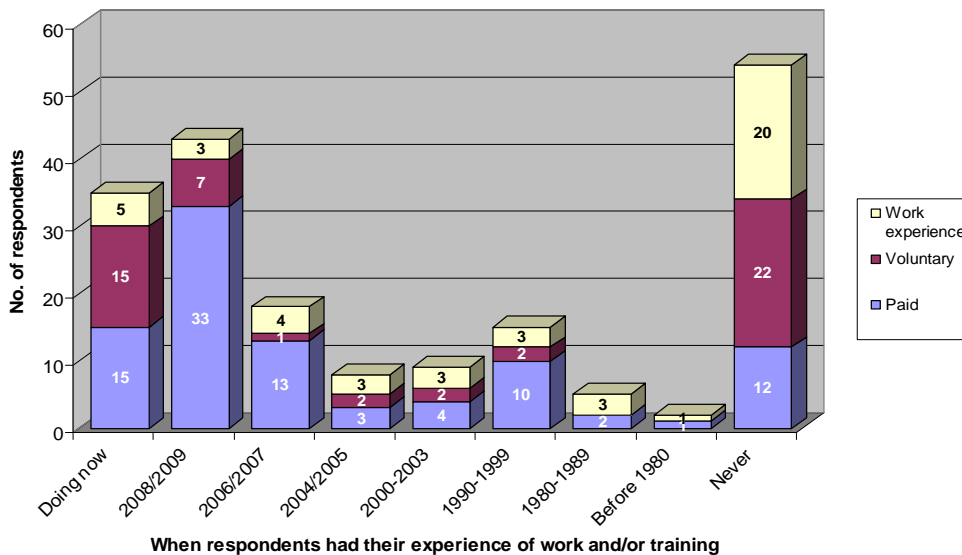
Note 22 Support workers have to manage expectations but a mechanism might be required to ensure this is handled carefully so that able people are not labelled and held back



- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| A Don't know what's available | J Childcare issues |
| B Worried about level of commitment | K Alcohol or drug dependency |
| C Worried about effect on state benefits | L Personal organisation, e.g. time management |
| D Mental health issues | M Support staff don't think I'm ready |
| E Can't find something I want to do | N Employers won't or can't accommodate my needs |
| F Just not interested in training | O Physical access issues |
| G Low level of confidence | P Don't see the point |
| H No-one I know thinks training is worth doing | Q Not 'feeling ready' for it |
| I Travel costs | R Other |

12 RECENT EXPERIENCES OF PAID AND VOLUNTARY WORK AND TRAINING

Answered: 110; Skipped: 14



A high number of responses were incomplete, especially on paper surveys. Blank spaces may mean individuals had no experience but this is not a guaranteed assumption. As such, it is understood that 11% had never been in paid work, 20% had never undertaken voluntary work and 18% had never engaged in training.

33% were currently involved in some form of work or training (14% in paid work, 14% volunteering, 5% on training). A further 39% had been active in the past year (2008) (30% in paid work, 6% volunteering, 3% training). Overall, 74% had had some form of paid work at some point in the past. This compares to 27% who had experience of voluntary work and 23% who had been involved in training.

13 HOW PEOPLE FIND OUT ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES

Answered: 94; Skipped: 30

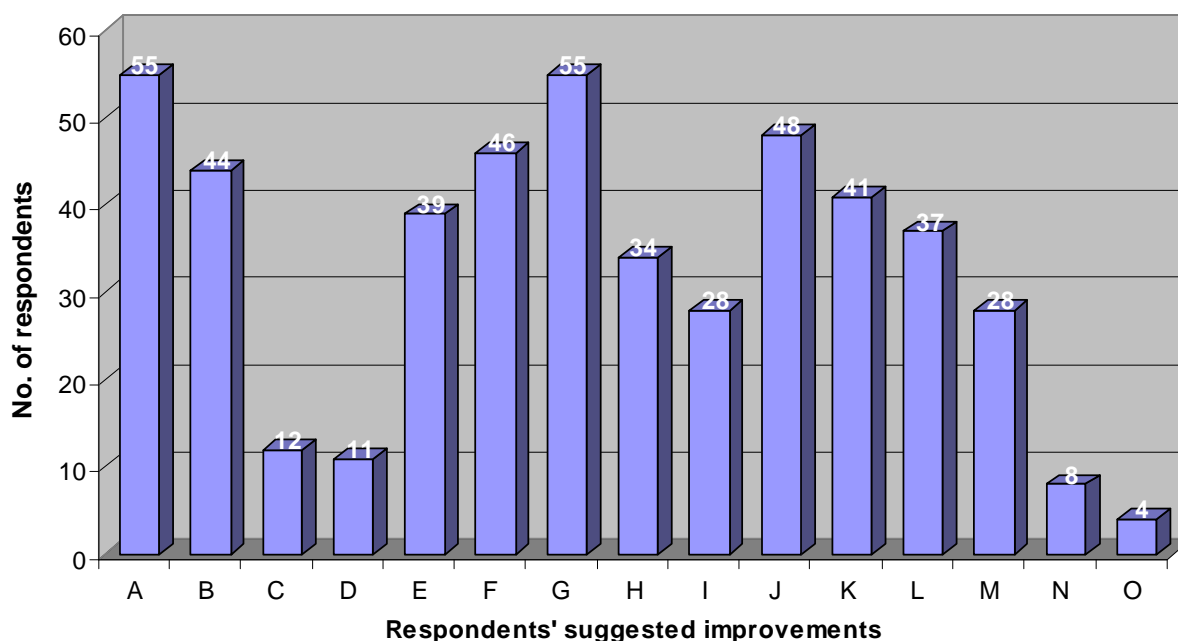
Information from support staff	26%	Information from leaflet or poster	13%
Job Centre	31%	Word of mouth	40%
College or training centre	20%	Other	21%

Word of mouth appears to be the most effective means of spreading information about work, volunteering or training opportunities with 40% plus selecting 'through friends' as how they found out about opportunities. The Job Centre was the next best source of information (31%), followed by support staff (26%). Information from leaflets and posters fared least well, although 13% still acknowledged them as useful. Leaflets and posters are likely to be good sources of information for support staff and those in Job Centres as the information they provide is easy to access. Other respondents also reported finding out about work by volunteering first, through Probation and Connexions, from advertising and by approaching employers direct.

Note 23 Peer advocacy, information exchange and mentoring would create capacity, provide voluntary opportunities for workless people and lead to employment, while building on something that is working well

14 IMPROVEMENTS TO MAKE IT EASIER TO FIND THE RIGHT TRAINING/EMPLOYMENT

Answered: 104; Skipped: 20



- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A Improved information about all opportunities | J Help with the gap between benefits stopping and receiving first wages |
| B Additional/better information on where to get help | K Better information about how work, training and volunteering affects benefits |
| C Consistent advice/approach between staff | L Variety of training opportunities at different levels |
| D Better childcare provision | M Training tailored for unemployed people |
| E Wider variety of flexible employment opportunities | O None of the above |
| F Initial help with travel costs | P Other |
| G Money for the right clothes and/or equipment | |
| H Work opportunities with support workers on hand | |
| I Work where it's not all about targets and profit | |

This question provides a check against previous responses and some observations have been made already in this report. It is reassuring then that most people cited improved information about opportunities (53%) and help with money for clothing and equipment (53%) as the steps to enable them to take up opportunities. This is supported by 44% who said help with travel costs would be beneficial. Further assistance during the gap between coming off benefits and starting work was reported as important by 46% of respondents.

Improving information about opportunities and where to get help is the most important factor. Help with practical, financial issues associated with the cost of work and training is the next highest priority. Linked to this is better information and support over benefits issues, where 39% indicated this was an issue.

In the mid-range responses, feedback focussed on the nature of work opportunities and how they could be more accessible. This information is useful because it goes beyond the immediate barriers and asks respondents to think beyond their current situation. 33% said support workers on hand once they have gained work would help them overcome the challenges of employment. A wider range of opportunities would provide them with a better chance of entering the job market according to 38%, while 27% went further saying work that wasn't all about targets, deadlines and profit was important.

Other studies offer complementary information. *Making Work, Work* calls for help with financial planning and welfare rights for people entering work, access to specialist education, training and employment activities, better in-work support and accommodation specifically for people who are working (for example, away from chaotic environments). The only caveat highlighted by the findings in this report might be that if specialist advice is not available, care must be taken that support is well-informed and does not dissuade people from thinking about work. OSW's *Right Deal for Homeless People* also presents on the range of support that needs to be available alongside individuals' transitions into employability and, ultimately, sustained employment.

See Notes 13 and 16

Note 24 In-work and 'into work' support could be made more available and given a higher profile

Note 25 While there is a campaign for Government to create incentives for benefit claimants who gain work, B&NES might explore local opportunities such as protecting individuals' Housing Benefit or supporting them through grants, perhaps. If it was possible within legislation, some form of 'disregard' of earnings for a period of time could save money long-term as successfully gaining employment would reduce Housing Benefit claims

15 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

There was a good spread of responses with the majority, 98%, representing ages 18-50. The 51-65 age groups face specific issues in terms of worklessness. It is a similar issue with 16-17 year olds, who have yet to break into the labour market and may face various barriers plus a lack of experience. For both these age groups, however, sample sizes were insufficient to draw reliable conclusions about their specific needs.

There was an almost 50/50 split of male and female responses. This may be worthy of further study as it was anticipated that the nature of job aspirations may be split along gender lines, for example, with construction and perhaps shop work. (These assumptions were put forward by the advisory group, drawing on attendees' experience of the groups involved.)

There was good representation from most areas of B&NES. 38% were from central Bath and another 38% were in Bath but more than 15 minutes walk from the Abbey. 23% were from elsewhere in B&NES, which is a good spread considering the concentration of services in the centre.

ⁱ *Tackling Worklessness: A Review of the contribution and role of local authorities and partnerships* [Stephen Houghton, Claire Dove, Iqbal Wahhab, November 2008]

ⁱⁱ www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/about_the_cabinet_office/publicserviceagreements.aspx

ⁱⁱⁱ *Developing and delivering the housing response to worklessness for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness* [Sheila Spencer, Housing Quality Network, March 2009]

^{iv} *The Right Deal for Homeless People* [Michael Fothergill, Off the Streets and into Work, 2008]

^v *Making Work, Work* [Business in the Community – Business Action on Homelessness, January 2009]

^{vi} www.communityallowance.org

^{vii} www.osw.org.uk/services/willow.asp

^{viii} *Employers' attitudes to hard-to-employ groups* [Scott and Sillers, Caledonian University, April 2003]

OBSERVATIONS – IDEAS TO BE CONSIDERED

- Note 1** B&NES could convene an advisory group to review findings, work on practical responses, link up the relevant networks, departments and strategies, and engage and inform the UK worklessness agenda
- Note 2** Ongoing data could be collated to learn more about how to support transitions into work
- Note 3** A website could be set up for local agencies and service users to engage with worklessness
- Note 4** Qualitative research might review the quality of support on employment and training
- Note 5** Data on service users' educational standards is still required
- Note 6** Volunteering and training are important but paid work is the main goal and must be the focus
- Note 7** Personal development on working within a team helps address one of the key aspirations
- Note 8** Training or voluntary placements in trades identified as short-term options, (eg, construction, painting/ decorating, etc), should be supported as a way to engage with people taking first steps out of worklessness
- Note 9** Training, volunteering and paid work should be supported in trades identified as long-term aspirations, (eg, retail, animals, support work, etc), including support for employers or enterprises
- Note 10** Public sector bodies can create and support opportunities for workless people not just through funding but more sustainably through procurement, contract-based partnerships, and commissioning
- Note 11** Link up at sub-regional level to learn how regeneration can benefit workless people
- Note 12** Flexible paid or voluntary work experience will help people make changes at their own pace
- Note 13** Increase welfare rights advice – services and materials, and staff training within agencies
- Note 14** Third sector agencies could consider staff training and affordable rents for people accessing work
- Note 15** Agencies engaging job seekers, those in contact with employers and those supporting workless people need to work together to strengthen the bridge to employment
- Note 16** Identify and promote grants and other financial help for people accessing employment
- Note 17** A resource promoting skills-based learning, preferably accredited training (see section 10), and highlighting the benefits in terms of employment best fits the training interests of workless people
- Note 18** Personal development through workshops and voluntary or paid work placements would help people feel active, engaged and growing in confidence and skills. There could be help for supportive employers
- Note 19/20** Training providers and volunteer networks need to link into the worklessness agenda
- Note 21** Flexible 'skilling' options (eg, volunteering) and information about courses, etc, are needed
- Note 22** A mechanism might be required to ensure workless people are not labelled and held back
- Note 23** Peer advocacy, information exchange and mentoring would create capacity, provide voluntary opportunities for workless people and lead to employment, while building on something that is working well
- Note 24** In-work and 'into work' support could be made more available and given a higher profile
- Note 25** B&NES might explore opportunities for financial assistance as people move off benefits