

Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

16 November 2021

Social Mobility in Dorset

For Review and Consultation

Portfolio Holder: Cllr S Flower, Leader of the Council

Local Councillor(s): All

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Report Status: Public

Recommendation:

That the Scrutiny Committee;

- i) Note the evidence attached regarding social mobility in Dorset.
- ii) Identify any recommendations to Cabinet for further work to improve social mobility in Dorset.

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure the council is being evidence led in its response to social mobility and the barriers and challenges experienced by residents.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 On the 3 August 2021 all councillors were invited to a seminar on tackling inequalities. One of the outputs from those discussions identified by Senior Leadership was for a report to be prepared for this committee on what this council is doing to improve social mobility in Dorset, and identify any gaps or where more work could or needs to be done.

- 1.2 In 2017 the Social Mobility Commission reported that Weymouth and Portland was the 3rd worst local authority in the country for social mobility.
- 1.3 In 2018 The House of Commons Library research service, using the same methodology as the Social Mobility Commission, released a briefing paper which found that the South Dorset parliamentary constituency was the worst for social mobility, out of 533 constituencies in England.
- 1.4 Against the backdrop of poor social mobility came the Covid-19 pandemic which has a significant impact. The Sutton Trust, in their report titled 'lost learning, lost earning' said that "school closures (during the pandemic) are likely to have substantial negative labour market impacts for those from less-well off groups, their chances of social mobility, and on the economy in general." The updated Corporate Plan puts renewed emphasis on the importance of helping Dorset's children to recover from the pandemic. Improving education is one of the key factors in improving social mobility.

2. Financial Implications

None in relation to this report. Improved social mobility has benefits including a higher skilled workforce, earning better wages, improving the local economy and increasing the tax take. Secondary benefits include better public health reducing the need for expensive interventions.

3. Well-being and Health Implications

Poor health has been linked to poor educational outcomes, reduced development, and ultimately, worse social mobility. Increased social mobility will have beneficial implications for public health.

4. Climate implications

No direct implications.

5. Other Implications

As explained above, the updated Corporate Plan puts renewed emphasis on the importance of helping Dorset's children to recover from the pandemic. Improving education is one of the key factors in improving social mobility.

6. Risk Assessment

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Medium

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

Not required.

8. Appendices

1. Key recommendations for local government

9. Background Papers

1. Institute for Employment Studies/Salvation Army report
<https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/understanding-people-understanding-places>
2. UK Prosperity Index 2021 <https://li.com/reports/uk-prosperity-index-2021/>
3. Members' seminar slides
4. Early Help Outcomes and Impact Statement

10. Background and context

- 10.1 On the 3 August 2021 all Members were invited to a seminar on tackling inequalities. One of the recommendations that followed from those discussions was for a report to be prepared for this committee on what this council is doing to improve social mobility.
- 10.2 In their 2019 manifesto, the government committed to 'levelling up' every part of the UK. This was in response to a long-known issue with regional disparities which the Institute for Fiscal Studies found was greater than in most comparable countries. This led to the launch of the Levelling Up fund in March 2021.

10.3 The Levelling Up Fund methodology has faced considerable scrutiny since it was released for a number of reasons. One key issue identified early on by this council was the decision to evaluate 'need' at the local authority level. Dorset Council as a whole is not particularly deprived, but this hides the fact that within the area are some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. This message had been relayed to our MPs in the hope that they will lobby ministers to rethink the way the funding is prioritised. We are not alone in this – organisations like The Salvation Army and The Young Foundation have raised the same issue.

10.4 Dorset Council submitted a bid to the Levelling Up Fund for £17 million. The bid has two elements, the regeneration of Weymouth town centre and the regeneration of the harbourside.

Unfortunately, the bid was not selected in the latest round of bids on the 27th October. The Levelling Up White Paper to be published later this year will set out further detail on the government's plans in this area – in relation to further opportunities and through the Shared Prosperity Fund.

10.5 On the 19 September 2021 the government announced that:

“The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will become the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities as the Government delivers on its central mission to level up every part of the UK.”

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP becomes the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, while former Bank of England Chief Economist Andy Haldane is the new Head of the Levelling Up Taskforce. Changes at national level present potential opportunities for the council to work with MPs and government to lobby for Dorset.

10.6 From March 2020 the government provided an uplift of £20 a week to those in receipt of Universal Credit. This is due to end by 6 October 2021. This will have a significant impact on Dorset's most vulnerable residents and particularly children and young people.

10.7 Devolution has seen some powers passed from central government to regions and city mayors. Metro Mayors in parts of England (and the Mayor of London) hold executive powers over spatial planning, regional transport, the provision of skills training, business support services, and economic development. Champions of social mobility, like the Social

Mobility Commission have long argued that more powers should be devolved to the regions to allow more flexibility in how the money is spent.

11. Social mobility in Dorset

- 11.1 Social mobility is the movement of individuals, families, or groups through a system of social hierarchy. This can be movement upwards as well as downwards. 'Good' social mobility is facilitating this movement or, removing any barriers that may be preventing people from moving through the social hierarchy.
- 11.2 What does good social mobility look like? Much of the literature around social mobility focusses on education, good quality jobs, particularly jobs which have a career ladder and social protections to give a helping hand to those who are struggling. Areas with the highest social mobility combine access, quality and equity in education, while also providing work opportunities and good working conditions, alongside quality social protection and inclusive institutions (World Economic Forum).
- 11.3 Research over the course of the pandemic has shown that existing inequalities defined by income, place, health and ethnicity have been exacerbated. The Sutton Trust's report 'Lost Learning, Lost Earnings' found that "school closures (during the pandemic) are likely to have substantial negative labour market impacts for those from less-well off groups, their chances of social mobility, and on the economy in general."
- 11.4 In 2018 the council's Research Team carried out a detailed analysis of social mobility across Dorset, using the Social Mobility Commission's national analysis as a basis. The Commission had found that out of 324 local authority areas in England, Weymouth and Portland ranked 322. The poor ranking was primarily down to children from deprived families attending inadequately rated primary and secondary schools, poor KS2 attainment, poor 'points score entry' for A-Levels and the proportion of the working age population earning below the 'real living wage'.
- 11.5 The other District areas in Dorset performed much better than Weymouth and Portland although none ranked near the top. Of the former districts that make up the Dorset Council area, East Dorset ranked highest at 147.

- 11.6 Dorset as a whole (including Christchurch) scored below the national average for nursery & primary Ofsted ratings, KS2 achievement, points score entry for A-levels and earnings.
- 11.7 There are currently no secondary schools in Weymouth and Portland rated 'good' by Ofsted. The four schools, All Saints' Church of England Academy, Wey Valley, Budmouth Academy and Atlantic Academy are currently awaiting inspection.
- 11.8 A thriving economy attracting employers who provide well-paid jobs is vital to improving social mobility. The UK Prosperity Index 2021 ranked Dorset 94th out of 379 local authority areas. Dorset, however, ranks very poorly for infrastructure (359th) and below average for economic quality, enterprise conditions and social capital.
- 11.9 The UK Prosperity Index uses Pembrokeshire County Council's 'Kickstart Scheme' as an example of a project to get young people into work. The scheme provides funding to employers to create job placements for 16- to 24-year-olds, which they suggest could act as a blueprint for other local authorities.
- 11.10 The Social Mobility Commission's recommendations for local authorities include raising aspirations of young people, building a sense of belonging and forming positive connections through local leadership and strong school-community links, improving transport links and increasing pay for the low paid. An improved sense of belonging alongside strong school-community links are attributed to the dramatically improved social mobility seen in many London Boroughs in the last 20 years (along with increased funding for the capital's schools).

Recommendations

- 11.11. The Social Mobility report makes a series of recommendations for councils, set out below with a summary of similar local action underway and possible additional action that could be considered. As an update the UK Prosperity Index 2021 report was recently published and highlights additional areas for which Dorset scored poorly that could be considered for action. These are included in italics below.

Appendix 1

Key recommendations for local government	Local action already underway and additional actions for consideration
<p><i>Improve infrastructure, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Transport: quality, diversity, and penetration of road and rail transport within a local authority, as well as access to key transport hubs.</i> • <i>Communications: internet speed and how widespread access to superfast internet is.</i> 	<p>Infrastructure plans relating specifically to Weymouth and Portland will inform development of the Stronger Neighbourhoods (SN) strategy as well as its delivery,</p> <p>Ever faster fixed and mobile broadband delivered by a series of programmes and projects to complement market-based delivery. Current Dorset Rural 5G projects exploring use in agritech and offshore applications, building on facilities at Council-owned Dorset Innovation Park.</p> <p>One of 6 priorities in our 3 year <u>Children, Young People and Families Plan</u> is “Delivering Locally”. The main intended outcome is that families are able to benefit from local services, whether those services are delivered face-to-face in the communities they live in or accessible virtually.</p> <p>Examples of Achievements of the Delivering Locally Plan in the first year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - children’s services locality teams working together, across disciplines, to wrap services around children, young people and families (approach praised in Ofsted inspection due to evidence of impact on outcomes for children) - strengthened / created Local Alliances (groups made up of representatives from key partner agencies in each of our localities, including parents, carers and young people as well as Voluntary and Community Partners) - each alliance has established local priorities and plans, to be delivered through steering groups

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in Weymouth and Portland, linked to the Stronger Neighbourhoods Project to influence planning and delivery - established the local authority Early Help offer for families, linking with local community members to deliver services for children, young people and their families - created / strengthened virtual and face-to-face support for families, responding to Covid guidance - sustained safe face-to-face services with children, young people and families <p>Next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -to understand gaps in access to services due to transport and infrastructure; - to understand where digital access is restricted <p>Ensure locality plans help to address transport and digital access; linking to wider, strategic plans to improve access to services.</p>
<p><i>Improve economic quality, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Productivity</i> • <i>Dynamism: business churn.</i> • <i>Labour force engagement</i> • <i>Fiscal sustainability (of the local authority).</i> • <i>Macroeconomic stability: GVA growth, inactivity shocks, economic shrinkage, SME growth.</i> 	<p>Economic regeneration plans and pieces of work relating specifically to Weymouth and Portland will inform development of the SN strategy as well as its delivery.</p> <p>The SN strategy will work alongside economic regeneration activity in Weymouth and Portland, making good use of connections and links for the benefit of other aspect of the councils work and service provision in the local area.</p> <p>Both LEP -level economic strategy (Strategic Economic Plan, Local Industrial Strategy, Dorset investment prospectus) and council level strategy (Dorset</p>

	<p>Council Plan, DC Economic Growth Strategy) are focused on increasing productivity through high quality jobs, particularly in key sectors.</p> <p>Dorset Innovation Park is designed to create a cluster of advanced engineering, defence, and security businesses. The nearly-complete MOD innovation Battle Lab will be a catalyst for future growth. The submitted Levelling Up Fund round 1 bid includes provision for a second battle lab on Portland.</p> <p>In our Local Alliance Groups we have set a priority to engage and work with local employers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enable and support parents and carers and young people into work - Influence locality plans and play a role in supporting children and young people to aspire to work and live in Dorset <p>We would also like to use our direct engagement with community members to inform economic strategy.</p>
<p><i>Improve enterprise conditions, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Business environment: Property costs, compliance, local government restrictions.</i> • <i>Domestic Market Contestability: how open the market is to new participants vs. incumbents.</i> • <i>Labour Market Flexibility: how dynamic and flexible the workplace is for both employer and employee.</i> 	<p>The Growth and Economic Regeneration function at the council is in the process of a redesign to better serve these needs. The Local Development Order simplifies planning at the Dorset Innovation Park while Enterprise Zone status reduces business rates for new tenants. The Inward Investment team helps businesses source suitable employment space. Since much of Dorset is designated AONB there are significant planning constraints in many rural areas.</p> <p>As part of our commitment to “whole family working” we have sustained links with employment advisors (Department for Work and Pensions). Our practitioners sustain focus on economic wellbeing for families. This includes</p>

	<p>access to employment. We work with Family Learning to develop relevant learning opportunities for family members.</p>
<p><i>Improve social capital, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Family relationships.</i> • <i>Civic and Social Participation: through volunteering, donating money, and local meeting places such as pubs and sports clubs.</i> • <i>Institutional Trust: courts and Parliament.</i> • <i>Social Networks: ties that an individual has with people in their wider network.</i> • <i>Personal Support: support that individuals feel from their community.</i> 	<p>Issues relating to social capital will form a significant core to the work of SN, and activities relating specifically to Weymouth and Portland will inform development of the SN strategy as well as its delivery,</p> <p>SN aims to take a whole council approach to strengthen whole communities and social networks, support and facilitate real civic and social engagement, working with whole families, and recognising supporting individuals in the context of their whole lives.</p> <p>In Children’s Services our priority is to keep children with their families and, where this is not possible, to keep them close to home so they can sustain connection and relationships with family and friends. We are creating new children’s homes in Weymouth and have invested in special provision for children with Special Educational Needs.</p> <p>Our locality model enables us to respond to the unique needs of each place and to connect to the local context our children grow up in. We are committed to an asset-based community development approach; to harnessing community assets to build on local resilience and local solutions.</p> <p>We are working with Help and Kindness to build on the great achievements of the volunteer network, built through the pandemic.</p> <p>We link to existing agencies working to enhance social capital such as credit unions, projects that provide local solutions to food poverty and organisations that offer positive activities to support good health.</p> <p>Our early help model in children’s services supports families through 4 levels of work: information, advice and guidance (linking families to existing</p>

	<p>community or online support); group work (working with cohorts of children, young people, parents and carers to enhance health and wellbeing; family work (working predominantly in family homes, drawing on multi-agency and community support to improve outcomes for children. Our practitioners also help and support others to initiate or sustain effective models of help such as “Team Around the Family”.</p> <p>We aspire to develop Family Hubs that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intergenerational • Interoperable • Integrated with partners • Resident friendly • Local • Incorporating touchdown and meeting venues for staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every local authority should develop an integrated strategy for improving disadvantaged children’s outcomes. This should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ quality improvement support for early education settings, including collaborative working groups, tailored advice and comprehensive training for early years teachers 	<p>Improving outcomes for disadvantaged children relating specifically to Weymouth and Portland will inform development of the SN strategy as well as its delivery,</p> <p>We support schools and early years settings to work collaboratively to ensure children experience belonging in an educational setting and to ensure they share best practice. Each locality team includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specialist Teachers who help schools support pupils with specific needs

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ driving uptake of the early education offer for disadvantaged two-year-olds and ensuring that they do not lose places to children eligible for the 30-hour offer – ensuring that all parenting support programmes are evidence based and experimenting with ways to offer effective advice to more parents. ● Early education and childcare providers should invest pupil premium funds in evidence-based practice using the Early Education Foundation’s toolkit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education Challenge Leads who support schools with sustaining inclusive and diverse curriculum and with quality improvement - Early Years Support and Advice officers who support early years providers in the same way - Inclusion Leads who work with schools to ensure children are well supported in educational settings and enabled to access the curriculum. <p>Inclusion Leads work to prevent children experiencing fixed term or permanent exclusion.</p> <p>A strong focus in our Children, Young People and Families Plan – working with the LGA for a 10 year plan and working on implementation of a PAUSE programme.</p> <p>We are making good progress in delivering our Sufficiency Strategy and the quality of early years provision is high (99% good or above)</p> <p>We have a good understanding of the issues and challenges faced by the sector through regular surveys and conversations enabling us to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer appropriate support including additional financial support to settings at risk of closure (over £190k to support sustainability). • Understand take-up of places and possible future demand • Take-up of early years places has increased from 1,153 children in Feb 2021 to 8,151 at the end of the summer term <p>As a result of our concerns for those children (particularly around speech and language development) who are due to transfer to school but may not have accessed early education for the past 12 months we secured additional investment which has delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 161 children accessed over 7,000 hours of additional free early education to help boost their development
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The roll-out of the WELCOM programme to all settings, so that children are given the help they need to catch up and targeted of support to those settings who identify children with a language delay • We are working with CCG colleagues to jointly commission a new model of Speech and Language support and we have increased our investment this year <p>We operate a Golden Ticket system whereby families eligible for early years education for children and 2 years receive a golden ticket to exchange for sessions with a local provider. Our uptake of early years funding is above national average.</p> <p>Our parent support offer is delivered both virtually and online by qualified and accredited practitioners in evidence-based practice. It is co-ordinated across the county and has reached over 200 parents and carers since April 2021 and supports parents and carers of children of all ages, including teenagers.</p> <p>We are developing a robust workforce development offer for our early years workforce, drawing on the expertise of colleagues in health, education, social care and early help.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities should support collaboration between isolated schools, subsidise transport for disadvantaged young people in isolated areas and encourage Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) to follow the North East LEP's approach to improving careers support for young people 	<p>Work to improve careers support and work readiness for young people relating specifically to Weymouth and Portland will inform development of the SN strategy as well as its delivery</p> <p>Career support is provided through the Careers and enterprise company and join working across Economic Development and Children,s Services teams.</p> <p>We have recently TUPED staff from Ansbury Guidance to enable our young people to be supported into employment through our teams.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools should work with local employers to meet the key Gatsby careers support benchmarks (a set of critical careers support requirements based on international standards) and to ensure that all young people are well prepared for work. 	<p>Our Education Challenge Leads work with schools, including primaries, to focus on education and employment opportunities and careers advice for young people. This has been achieved through linking with national and local projects. We would like to enhance this work further.</p> <p>Dorset Council is part of the Dorset Careers hub which is supporting all schools and colleges to deliver their statutory requirements relating to careers (including Gatsby Benchmarks). Every term all schools and colleges performance is measured by dedicated staff against these standard benchmarks by Dorset Council in partnership with other stakeholders.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government should develop shorter-term action plans with employers, educators, universities and other key local stakeholders to improve opportunities for local disadvantaged people. 	<p>Strategies employed to improve opportunities for disadvantaged children relating specifically to Weymouth and Portland will inform development of the SN strategy as well as its delivery</p> <p>The Economic Growth Strategy acknowledges the need to update plans more frequently than usual especially considering the effects of Brexit and Covid. Work on the accompanying Action Plan was paused as the team shifted to delivering the “saving lives” action of pandemic response and recovery, including distributing £13 million in loans to micro and small businesses. Work will recommence shortly.</p> <p>The ICS Health Inequalities programme in Dorset is leading the development of an Anchor Institutions network to support partner organisations in progressing this agenda. Colleagues in Dorset Council see this as an opportunity to work with partners on a number of key policy areas such as opportunities for localising procurement, raising aspirations of local residents to seek careers in our larger public sector organisations (and in particular looking to provide apprenticeship opportunities for those young people</p>

	<p>furthest from employment readiness) and also to promote staff volunteering to enable the Council to better understand the communities we serve.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities should all become accredited Living Wage employers and encourage others in their communities to do likewise 	<p>Dorset Council uses national pay scales. The lowest rate is currently £9.25/hour, slightly below the on-statutory “Real living wage” of £9.50 /hour. Dorset Council Terms and conditions for holiday, sick pay, pension etc are significantly above the statutory minima.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local government leaders should put social mobility at the heart of economic and educational development and take coordinated action to tackle the social mobility challenges of their areas by each developing a ten-year social mobility strategy with clear progress measures. This should include a focus on improving transport links to social mobility hotspots in rural and coastal areas. 	<p>Developments designed to increase social mobility relating specifically to Weymouth and Portland will inform development of the SN strategy as well as its delivery</p> <p>DCs corporate priorities of inclusive economic growth, suitable housing, strong, healthy communities, and staying safe and well all contribute to improving social mobility.</p> <p>DCs two recent bids to the Levelling Up Fund were entirely focused on Weymouth and Portland, one improving sustainable transport links around the station, the other regenerating derelict brownfield sites on or near the waterside.</p> <p>Reducing health inequality is also a key driver of Public Health Dorset’s activities.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local government should develop a new deal with employers and educators for inclusive employment, based on jointly agreed local social mobility action plans, using the Social Mobility Employer Index as a framework for employer action. 	<p>While there is significant work to better connect education and skills provision to employment demand, especially for higher quality jobs, this is not done within the context of a social mobility plan at present.</p>

Footnote:

Issues relating to financial, legal, environmental, economic and equalities implications have been considered and any information relevant to the decision is included within the report.