LABOUR MARKET AND BENEFIT CLAIMANTS

What’s the issue?

Long-term unemployment can have a very high negative influence on both physical and mental health. People who are long-term unemployed or are in short-term or low paid jobs with little stability including those on zero-hour contracts, have increased stress levels, lower self-esteem, and have a much higher risk of benefit dependence. This not only affects the individuals, their families and communities, but influences the local economy of Hull.

Entrenched worklessness affects the entire family, and children living in families where parents are not working are more likely to live in poverty, leave school with none or low levels of qualifications, and be unemployed themselves or have low paid employment. This can become a vicious circle where children and young people imitate parents' behaviours, and do not value education and employment, and find it difficult to find regular well-paid employment particularly so if they have lower educational attainment.

What’s our situation?

From the official labour market statistics [186], in the year October 2015 to September 2016, 63,600 Hull men (72.5%) were in employment, compared to 77.0% for the region and 78.8% for GB, and 53,300 women (62.3%) compared to 67.9% for the region and 69.0% for GB, with an employment rate of 67.5% for Hull males and females combined. The unemployment rate in Hull was 9.0% among men (compared to 5.9% for the region and 5.1% for GB) and 8.5% among women (compared to 5.2% for the region and 4.8% for GB) with 6,300 men and 5,000 women unemployed in Hull. Of the 43,900 Hull people aged 16-64 years who were economically inactive, 27.0% were students, 31.8% were looking after the home or family, 25.3% were long-term sick or disabled, 6.4% were retired, 6.4% had other reasons for not working, with the remaining 3.1% either temporarily sick or disabled or discouraged. Of these 43,900 people, 15,000 (34.2%) wanted a job. One in twenty Hull people in employment are managers, directors and senior officials (5.6%), 17.5% have professional occupations, 10.5% have associate professional and technical occupations, 9.7% work in administrative or secretarial occupations, 13.2% have skilled trades occupations, 10.3% working in caring, leisure and other service occupations, 11.6% work in sales and customer service occupations, 8.0% are process plant and machine operatives, and 12.4% have elementary occupations. The percentages for these nine occupational groupings for GB are 10.5%, 20.2%, 14.3%, 10.4%, 10.4%, 9.1%, 7.8%, 6.4% and 10.7% respectively. Earnings were also lower with a full-time worker in Hull earning 8.7% less than a full-time worker in the region. The gap between residence-based and workplace-based figures, indicate that people who come into Hull to work earn more than the people who live and work in Hull. Since 2013, the unemployment rate has decreased considerably in Hull from a high of 16%. Since July 2014 to June 2015, there has also been an upward shift in the occupational groupings with 34% in the highest three occupational groups compared to 28%, although over the same period, among those who are economically inactive, a higher percentage want a job (up from 23.6% to 34.2%).

There has been a recent focus on a new “entrenched worklessness” indicator, which is high for Hull. For Hull over the period April 2014 to March 2015, it was estimated that there were 132,000 people aged 22-59 years of whom 13,780 (10.4%) were claiming Job Seeker’s Allowance (JSA), in either the Assessment Phase or the Work Related Activity Group of Employment and Support Allowance, or a lone parent in receipt of Income Support on the 31st March 2015, and that 8,590 (62.3%) of them had been claiming benefits for at least three out of the last four years (“entrenched worklessness”). This is up from the previous year when it was 60.5% [187].

As at August 2016, there were 30,810 working-age benefit claimants in Hull, which represents around 18.3% of the working-age population. This is considerably higher than the region (12.8%) and England (10.9%) [186], although has decreased in Hull from May 2015 when it was 19.8%
St Andrew’s (30.6%, Orchard Park and Greenwood (30.1%) and Branshome West (29.5%) have the highest claimant rates, substantially higher than King’s Park (6.7%) and Beverley and Holderness (both 8.0%) [59, 189]. Almost one in ten (9.5%) working-age people are claiming Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance or Employment Support Allowance in Hull with 16,075 claimants [189]. The highest claimant rate was in Myton (15.7% overall and 9.0% for mental health reasons out of the working-age population) and St Andrew’s (17.5% overall and 9.4% for mental health reasons). The type of accommodation such as supported housing and hostels is likely to be influential for these wards.

See the JSNA section on transition into adulthood (www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#43) for information on the percentage of young people aged 16-18 year who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

For information on qualifications, see the JSNA section on schools and educational attainment (www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#41).

The influence of unemployment on health and wellbeing was mentioned among participants living in the most deprived areas of Hull when taking part in a local qualitative research project, summed up by the following quote: “I think that’s the worst thing is the high unemployment. I think if you can get people into work it’s good for their minds and it’s good for their bodies as well. Motivation, everything, I think it goes hands in hand really. You know, they can feel much better about themselves, give themselves more confidence. A better lifestyle as well, financially of course” [10].

For more detailed information, see the JSNA Toolkit: Deprivation and Associated Measures report.

What are the strategic needs?

Adults who are long-term unemployed should be given good, appropriate, timely advice, help and support, and additional training to improve their reliance, wellbeing and confidence so that they can achieve good future employment, and improve their health and wellbeing. Everybody should have the opportunity to improve their employment and life choices through increased education, training and knowledge.

A ‘health first’ approach should be used to tackle worklessness by promoting opportunities for people to be fit for work and fit in work. There also needs to be support for initiatives that create and provide access to quality sustainable jobs.

There is a need to improve the availability of affordable child care in order to maximise parental choice.

Hull’s City Plan [2], which aims to create 7,500 jobs for local people over the next 10 years sits at the heart of the developing ‘energy estuary’, making Hull the UK hub for renewable energy industries and investment due to its location. The City Plan also aims to make Hull a world-class visitor destination with visitor numbers trebling, boosted by the City of Culture 2017. The intension is to sustain these increased numbers beyond 2017.

It is necessary to ensure that local residents have the good health, fitness, skills, education and training required to take up these renewable energy and tourism employment opportunities.

Further information on the Priority Families programme in Hull is given within the ‘Hull Early Help and Priority Families Strategy 2015 – 2020” [76] discussed in the JSNA section on crime and domestic violence (www.hullpublichealth.org/jsna2017.html#13). The programme aims to change repeating generational patterns of poor parenting, abuse, violence, drug use, anti-social behaviour and crime in the most troubled families in Hull. This should improve the employment prospects of the people living in these families.
References


