

## Youth unemployment in Devizes

### Devizes Area Board - Sep 2023

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#### 1. Purpose:

Devizes Area Board in selecting their priorities and actions are encouraged to be led by the data that is available and select interventions that will have the maximum impact. At the June 2023 area board meeting, it was agreed for one of the priorities to be “Strengthening our local economy focussing upon business, tourism and young people”

The [Wiltshire Community Foundation Needs Analysis](#) was published in March 2023 and is the most up to date local data available. Most of the data is sourced from this document with supporting intelligence taken from the [Indices of Deprivation](#), [OFSTED reports](#) and the [Wiltshire Intelligence Network](#).

Devizes has the highest youth unemployment in Wiltshire and this report seeks to use available data and intelligence to not tackle just employment opportunities but to identify the root causes of it. This approach should help both prevent future youth unemployment but help to tackle the associated issues such as ASB and mental health.

#### 2. Summary of data:

- Devizes has the highest proportion of working age adults and young adults experiencing unemployment in Wiltshire.
- 3.05% of the Devizes population aged 16-64 receive unemployment benefit and 5.46% of those aged 18-24 receive youth unemployment benefit. Both are the highest in Wiltshire. The average in England for those receiving youth unemployment benefit is 4.7% and for 3.06% for Wiltshire.<sup>1</sup>
- Relatively high levels of youth unemployment are likely to be linked with low levels of Higher Education participation and low educational attainment of disadvantaged pupils across Wiltshire and Swindon. The data available suggests that this is the case.
  - The Wiltshire average for the number of young people aged 16+ who have no qualifications is 14.41%. The figure is 15.93% for Devizes.<sup>2</sup>
  - Devizes has an above average for Wiltshire number of young people aged 16+ who have only level 1 qualification. The figure is 11.6% compared with a Wiltshire average of 10.2%<sup>3</sup>
  - Average attainment for all students is below average for Wiltshire.<sup>4</sup>
  - Data from 2018/19 showed that during that year there were only 78 apprentices in the Devizes community area compared with an average of 139 in Wiltshire. However, it should be noted that the average was skewed by particularly high rates in Amesbury, Wootton Bassett, and Warminster.<sup>5</sup>
  - Devizes school has not had a full inspection by Ofsted since 2015. On average they take place every 4 years so one is probably due soon. A short inspection took place in 2019 and was awarded “good” status. Whilst it was noted that actions have been

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) November 2022

<sup>2</sup> Census 2021

<sup>3</sup> Census 2021

<sup>4</sup> [Children and Young People Wiltshire Intelligence](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Economy Wiltshire Intelligence](#)

taken by the school to improve attendance and that disadvantaged pupil attendance is improving, they observed that the “The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent is too high”.<sup>6</sup>

- Wiltshire College in Jan 2019 closed its site in Southbroom Road making it even more difficult for students to access courses as they now have to travel to Chippenham, Lacock or Trowbridge.
- Devizes has the lowest job access score in Wiltshire and Swindon – This is constructed by measuring the accessibility by public transport and car from every LSOA to work.<sup>7</sup> As a whole car ownership in Wiltshire is higher than national average but Devizes has the lowest car ownership in Wiltshire outside of Swindon and Salisbury.<sup>8</sup>
- Devizes also has the highest crime rate in Wiltshire and Swindon (116 offences per 1,000 population) and is concerning even when compared with the national average of 96.<sup>9</sup>
- Devizes South-West is one of the of the most deprived areas in Wiltshire and ranks amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England. Devizes East Central and Nort East are also in quintile 1. The key reasons for these areas being deprived are around income, education, skills, and crime.<sup>10</sup>
- Devizes also has the second highest level of mental health need in Wiltshire.<sup>11</sup>
- Devizes is about average for Wiltshire towns in areas such as personal debt and food poverty and that it has the greatest number of charities and the most charitable funding awarded to it in Wiltshire and Swindon.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. Summary of key issues:

- The data above informs us that Devizes has a problem with youth unemployment and that this seems to be linked to poor mental health and ASB amongst young people.
- The root causes for this seem to include:
  - *Educational attainment* - The gap between the disadvantaged young people and the non-disadvantaged has widened over recent years. This is reflected in attendance at school and behaviour both of which are known to be key contributors in obtaining employment.
  - *Access to further and higher education* – This has been exasperated by the closure of Wiltshire College in Devizes
  - *Access to jobs* – Travel to places of work is extremely challenging, particularly for the more disadvantaged as there is no rail station and they are less likely to own a car. The number of apprenticeships locally does not seem sufficient.

### 4. Next Steps:

- It should be noted that Devizes is performing as well if not better compared to other areas in Wiltshire such as around digital inclusion, care, the elderly, personal debt and the cost of living. Devizes also has the highest level of connectedness in Wiltshire.<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [50068043 \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspections/50068043)

<sup>7</sup> *UK Onward 2021*

<sup>8</sup> *Census 2021*

<sup>9</sup> *Police UK 2021/22*

<sup>10</sup> [English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019)

<sup>11</sup> *Place-Based Longitudinal Data resource 2019*

<sup>12</sup> *360 Giving Grant Nav data Feb 23*

- The findings instead suggest that the focus of our future work should be more around prevention and addressing the socio-economic challenges that face disadvantaged young people within Devizes.
- It is almost certain that a collaborative approach with partner organisations is required. Conversations should take place with key stakeholders including Wiltshire College, Devizes School, businesses (including Chamber of Commerce and FoSB), housing associations (Aster, Sovereign), Work Wiltshire, and young people to refine our understanding of the issues, and what is already happening. This should include looking at the link between education and local businesses as well as apprenticeships and job opportunities.
- Actions should be identified from these conversations that improve the life chances of our disadvantaged young people which will in turn should have a positive effect upon crime and mental health.

## **5. Recommendations:**

- I. Devizes Area Board creates a working group consisting of key stakeholders such as those included in section 4 in order to take forward this work. This group to be led by Cllr Iain Wallis and Cllr Dom Muns given their respective area board priority leads.
- II. The working group is accountable to Devizes area board and will regularly report back at the business meetings including any recommendations for interventions and requests for funding.

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<sup>i</sup> *Consultants for Social Inclusion and Local Trust 2019*