

Skills Advisory Panel

Committee Suite, County Hall, Exeter
11th November 2019

Minutes

Member Attendees

(FM)	Fiona McMillan, Chair / EDF Energy
(DR)	David Ralph, HotSW LEP
(KD)	Keri Denton, HotSW LEP / Devon County Council
(SC)	Steve Cardew, Plymouth ESB
(MM)	Mike Matthews, North Devon ESB
(MS)	Mark Shepard, Exeter ESB
(CW)	Carl Wyard, Torbay Development Agency
(MG)	Michael Green, Federation of Small Businesses
(CE)	Chris Evans, University of Exeter
(SR)	Sharon Robbie, Devon and Cornwall Training Provider Network
(RD)	Rod Davis, Dorset and Somerset Training Provider Network
(AB)	Andy Berry, Bridgwater and Taunton College
(JL)	John Laramy, Exeter College
(LF)	Laurence Frewin, South Devon College
(JG)	Jackie Grubb, City College Plymouth
(EC)	Elaine Cooke, Devon Communities Together
(CW)	Cheryl Ward, DWP

Others Present

(PA)	Phill Adams, HotSW LEP / Devon County Council
(JC)	Jacob Coburn, HotSW LEP / Devon County Council
(SMR)	Simone Marillier-Roberts, Devon County Council (minutes)
(KN)	Khristine Norton, Devon County Council
(PB)	Paul Blackmore, University of Exeter / Exeter ESB
(ECo)	Ed Coley, Plymouth City Council
(RB)	Rosie Bates, Exeter City Council
(BN)	Ben Neild, University of Exeter
(HS)	Hilary Stevens, University of Exeter
(LT)	Lee Tozer, DWP

Apologies

(KT)	Karl Tucker, Somerset SESSG
(SH)	Stephen Henagulph, Somerset Chamber
(SB)	Suzanne Bond, CLGU
(SP)	Seymour Pearman, ESFA

1) Welcome

- 1.1 Fiona McMillan welcomed attendees to the second SAP meeting and noted relevant absences.

2) Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 Members had no new declarations for the meeting. PA noted that members had now each completed their respective Declarations of Interest Forms linked to SAP membership.

3) Minutes of Last Meeting

- 3.1. The minutes from the SAP meeting on 29th July were approved. An update of the agreed actions from the meeting can be found below in Annex 1.

4) Update from Members

- 4.1 Members were invited by the Chair to feedback on issues / opportunities / challenges arising around skills and employment matters.
- 4.2 AB advised that the delivery of the South West Institute of Technology (IoT) was progressing, with Bridgwater and Taunton College taking forward a strand around welding technology, including a new centre of excellence serving both regional and national need. A particular focus is to be put on robotic welding equipment, with the facility to open within the first couple of weeks in January. AB encouraged members to consider how they could best utilise the new centre.
- 4.3 CE reinforced and broadened this point, advising that the IoT was formally awarded its licence in September. It was agreed as a result that it would be useful to have a presentation for members at the next session on the SWIoT and what it was seeking to achieve over its initial few years.

Action – Presentation at next SAP meeting on the emerging IoT/s, their plans and next steps

- 4.4 EC advised that activity was ongoing around the Empowering Enterprise programme, seeking to identify young people in rural areas who are at risk of becoming NEET. Research has already been undertaken to determine the challenges such young people face and what could be done to overcome related barriers to opportunity. EC advised that she would be happy to share this report with the group.

Action – EC to share report on barriers for young people in rural areas

- 4.5 JL reported that work was ongoing nationally around an independent commission led by Sir Ian Diamond on the 'College of the Future'. The

Commission has been established to consider future business needs from Colleges, as well as the likely future needs of young people. Uniquely, the Commission is also looking at the position across the four home nations, with a focus on structure and controls. Initial findings have focused upon the need for additional collaboration moving forward.

Action – Initial progress report to be circulated to members

- 4.6 MM that PETROC's Centre of Technology and Excellence (COTE) in North Devon is under construction and will provide access to high technology and will be manned 24 hours a day.
- 4.7 MS highlighted recent research by the OECD that the biggest threat in most businesses is the lack of aspiration amongst young people to meet their potential. The research suggests that from the age of 7, young people are only really inspired by the people they meet, with secondary evidence suggesting that exposure to individuals from outside their immediate peer circle can have an exaggerated impact on their progression. MS offered to share the research (and PA offered to circulate / host on SAP website on launch).

Action – OECD Research to be circulated

- 4.8 Building on the studies outlined, MM / SC questioned how the group will measure how much progress has been made. PA offered to come back to this later in the meeting.

5) SAP Baseline

- 5.1 Ben Neild and Hilary Stevens from the University of Exeter / Marchmont Observatory took the group through the emerging HotSW evidence base and related key policy messages.
- 5.2 BN briefly outlined the University's experience around the work programme and the specific piece of work they had been commissioned to take forward, producing a baseline for the HotSW as well as follow up deep dive analysis.
- 5.3 Before running through the data, BN advised that one strong message throughout was a need to improve the link between education and employment / workforce development. Discussions with employers consistently returned to the need for young people to be more adaptable; aware; have the ability to develop in role; and listen to instructions etc. This however requires a closer partnership approach between employers and educators to ensure fit.
- 5.4 HS / BN then moved into the main presentation, giving an overview of the content of the baseline paper sent to members in advance of the meeting. It was noting at the outset that the work was still in progress

and that comments were welcome from the group around whether the picture outlined resonated with members.

5.5 Key messages / points of interest picked up from the presentation included:

- That the economy had seen a period of enhanced GVA growth in many areas and sectors between 2011 and 2014/15, but that this had slowed in recent years.
- Despite this relative slowdown, employment growth in the HotSW had remained relatively healthy throughout. Is this contributing to a drop off in GVA?
- Whilst employment levels in the area were historically high however, the idea that this stemmed from more part time working and other issues seemed less clear cut. Looking into the data, only 5% of people were working less than 10 hours per week, whilst a far higher proportion were working more than 45 hours.
- Employment rates were at their highest amongst those aged 35-49, whilst the statistics presented at the meeting showed that people aged 50-64 presented the largest amount of people with a skill set below Level 2. However, data discrepancies were identified by the SAP group as to why this may be the case, though a member within the group did highlight that many of these people within this age range struggle significantly to get back into employment if they are made redundant because of their lack of digital skills as well as a lack of reading and writing skills.

In support of this, HS highlighted that recent analysis for NHS Devon suggested that people were indeed working long hours and commuting long distances therefore they do not have much time for home life. This was however having a direct impact on their health and wellbeing, impacting on NHS resources. Further research found that many people locally also had multiple jobs.

- That the HotSW had a lower proportion of people with no qualifications than comparator areas, with strong performance at intermediate levels. However, this didn't carry across to Level 4 and above.
- Individual sectors were however struggling around performance. A notable drop had occurred in the skills of those in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector for example, with SAP members discussing why this sector had seen such an adverse impact (part time working, downgrading of roles, etc). Employment data also appeared to suggest that there had been a significant drop in employment within scientific and professional roles in recent years in the local area.

- The data available also highlighted that the HotSW was behind the UK average in terms of the skills level of specialist roles within the digital sector but was actually in line with national skills averages for digital roles across the rest of the economy.
- One area of acute concern was around difficult to fill vacancies due to a shortage in skills, with Engineering being a particular hot spot. It was questioned if this was because of a skills gap or a tight labour market. Within the data, employers also noted however that there are a large amount of staff who are underutilised (they have more qualifications and experience than required for the role they are in).
- The presentation noted that the LEP performed particularly well in terms of self-employment (2nd nationally on the latter) but continued to have low rates of GVA and individual enterprise growth when compared with other areas. This raised questions over the types of self-employment being pursued.
- There was a significant time delay in parts of the data available, with SAP members keen to have more timely information. HS outlined the data types available to the team, but agreed it was an area to be looked at. This was particular important given recent trends around growth and skills, with the data often being 2 years old, but employment data suggesting significant shifts in trajectory in individual sectors.
- With regards training in the HotSW, statistics showed that employees in full time work receive more training opportunities than those in part time roles. Employees that self-advocated unsurprisingly also receive more training.
- Educational progression was an area of concern locally. Data presented suggested that many young people were not progressing onto HE within the HotSW, with a nationally significant gap between young people on FSM and young people who do not receive FSM (more pronounced in Plymouth and other deprived communities)

A detailed conversation ensued around the topic. This included a member within the group noting, that the family can have a particularly pronounced impact on young people, especially those receiving FSM; that the data being presented only looked at state-maintained schools, though private schools were included within the main paper; and that it wasn't clear whether the attainment data included students completing level 4 and 5 apprenticeships. It was agreed however this was an area of shared interest.

- 5.6 The Chair thanked the group for their initial observations and comments, which she felt provided a strong basis for the next item around next steps.

6) Forward Work Programme

6.1 The Chair invited PA to take the group through the item, with a focus on three core tasks to be completed before January:

- **Finalising the SAP Analytical Baseline** – Whilst a strong start had been made, it was important to now finalise the baseline document shared with the group, with an ambition to have a completed draft by the end of November. PA invited members to therefore re-read the 200-page document circulated and provide comments / observation back over the next few weeks.
- **Agreeing deep dive topics for future meetings** – PA asked members to consider the data shared today and feedback on the themes that they would like to explore over the next 3-6 meetings. Members raised the following topics:
 - **Transport / Social Mobility / Rurality** - It was highlighted that London and Manchester are offering free transport to 16-19-year olds so that their ambition is not limited by their location. It was suggested it would be good to look into this to determine why this age range was chosen. Subsequent discussion highlighted linked interests into social mobility and rurality as topics from members.
 - **Future of Work** – Members suggested that further work was needed on the future of work. It was advised that there was, for example an interesting article around a business who have changed their working pattern to a 4-day week with results showing that productivity have increased. The report as it stands also said little about future trends and this needed to be addressed.
 - **Health and Social Care** – Members noted acute labour shortages in Health and Social Care, where young woman made up the majority of workforce (unlike other areas). Many also had only basic qualifications, with limited progression routes available.
 - **Younger / Older Workers** – Members noted the specific data coming forward around the needs to younger people with barriers to progression, and around older people and skills. Both groups were identified as potential topics for focus.
- **Seeking to have a single voice around local priorities during any post-election / spending discussions** – PA noted that other SAPs were seeking to use their membership to align and agree core issues /priorities for their area in advance of any new Government / Spending Review in 2020. This could be an item to agree at the next meeting, whilst also pulling together something more immediately through a small task and finish approach / virtual group approach. EJ advised that the

budget will be set early next year therefore this needs to be ready to sign off by February. SC also raised the issue of whether we are able to influence Government policy through the SAP, noting that many of the issue raised today ultimately sat with central policy teams, and would this be a mechanism for doing so.

- 6.2 PA and FM thanked the group for their thoughts and now sought to move forward. PA agreed to write to members to ask them for additional feedback on the three items as outlined (alongside distribution of the minutes and presentations / documents) over the next week to try and make progress on each in advance of the January/Feb Session.

Action – Presentations / minutes / evidence document to be circulated to members alongside three specific asks, for members to:

- **Provide any further observations / information for inclusion / to inform the SAP Baseline report by 7th December;**
- **Provide additional topics and / or thoughts around the programme of Deep Dives by 7th December;**
- **Provide nominations to a virtual task and finish group which will produce a short menu of priorities for the HotSW to inform discussion following the Election and into the new spending review.**

7) AOB

- 7.1 PA highlighted that the first programme orientated sister group to the SAP, the Employment, Skills and Learning Delivery Group was to take place on Friday 15th November. This would manage and provide oversight for the specific funded programmes delivered by the LEP going forward. This meeting will follow on from the SAP meeting's in future session to allow members to attend both, but this hadn't been possible for this cycle.

Annex 1 – Actions from HotSW SAP, 29th July 2019

Action	Responsible / Lead	Completed?
PA to circulate Declaration of Interest Form to voting members	SAP Secretariat	This was sent to members on 18.09.2019. Most members have returned a completed copy.
Nominations for Deputy Chair to be sent to PA before next meeting	All	2 nominations were received. This will go back for discussions with principles and FE leads and then will be bought back in February. ...is going to act a vice chair during the interim.
Presentation slides to be circulated alongside Minutes	SAP Secretariat	A copy of the slides were sent to all members on 11.09.2019
SAP Meeting Papers to be circulated early to inform discussions – 2 weeks before meeting agreed	SAP Secretariat	A copy of the minutes were sent to members ahead of the meeting.
Structure Chart on Operational Group to be bought to next meeting	SAP Secretariat	This has not yet been completed. PA advised that this would be on the February agenda after discussions had taken place at the Employment, Skills and Learning Delivery Group meeting on 15.11.19.

Annex 2 – Actions from HotSW SAP, 11th November 2019

Action	Responsible / Lead	Completed?
All to share any useful information with PA so that this can be distributed to SAP leads.	All/PA	

<p>Presentations / minutes / evidence document to be circulated to members alongside three specific asks, for members to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide any further observations / information for inclusion / to inform the SAP Baseline report by 30th November; • Provide additional topics and / or thoughts around the programme of Deep Dives by 30th November; • Provide nominations to a initial task and finish group which will then produce a short priorities paper for the HotSW to inform any discussions following the Election / into the Spending Review. This will be produced before Christmas before being circulated to wider SAP members to consider. 	<p>PA</p>	
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