

## Heart of the South West Skills Advisory Panel

**17 September 2020**  
from  
**09:30am – 11:30am**

**Via Microsoft Teams**

### **09:30am Welcome, Introductions and Declarations of Interest**

#### **Attendees:**

- Fiona McMillan
- Mike Green
- Mike Matthews
- Steve Cardew
- Bill Blythe
- Stuart Elford
- David Ralph
- Rod Davis
- Mel Roberts
- Carl Wyard
- Edward Coley
- Phill Adams
- Keri Denton
- Sharron Robbie
- Hilary Stevens

- Paul Blackmore
- Jackie Grubb
- Khristine Norton
- Rosie Bates
- John Laramy
- Laurence Frewin
- Jo Holmes
- Andy Berry
- Tony Skeel
- Nora Corkery
- Cheryl Ward
- Helen Higgs
- Gabrielle Climbe

#### **Apologies:**

- Rob Bosworth
- Mark Sheppard
- Alan Denby
- Jamie Evans
- Chris Evans
- Sean Mackney
- Stephen Henagulph
- Debbie Wright
- Nicola Williams
- Julie Hawker
- Katy Quinn
- Lee Tozer
- Suzanne Bond
- Victoria Hatfield

### **09:35am Minutes of Last Meeting**

- Actions from last meeting:
  - ***Presentation on emerging Institute for Technology for members to happen at next meeting (now delayed to later in the year)***
  - ***Doug Lloyd from Kier has been invited to the next meeting. This will focus on nuclear, construction and digital***
  - ***Social Mobility Panel being taken forward. This will feature in COVID recovery plan, Phill Adams is in liaison with Martha***

**09:40am Update from on Evidence Base / Impact of COVID – Phill Adams / Hilary Stevens**

- Phill Adams provided an updated on the current Economic position. It was advised that a steady flow of information has been received following the impact the crisis has had over the past few months.
- A steep decline with a steep recovery is currently what the evidence is showing however a it is not believed that the 'calm period' will continue as we reach the winter period and more people are made redundant when furlough ends.
- It was advised that a drop off of 4% has been identified however we are expecting this to increase in October/November. We have seen a rapid return to productivity with Devon performing the best at only 7.5% loss. Somerset are not too far behind this due to some ongoing projects similarly to Plymouth however Torbay are not doing as well. It was advised that overall the South West have taken more of a hit compared to the national average.
- It was advised that data from the vulnerability index shows a mix bag throughout the Heart of the South West. Exeter is seen to do fairly well as well as Taunton and Plymouth however areas of Mid Devon are further up the list with some market and coastal towns as well as villages struggling. South Hams have the highest increase in unemployment according to the data which was highlighted as not something we expected. Similarly, Torbay had taken a hard hit with unemployment figures. It was highlighted that Mendip has accelerated far quicker than some of its surrounding areas.
- Phill advised that there has been a mixed picture with regards to employment and jobs over the past 6 months. Most have plummeted except Health and Social care however there is a slow return to normal in some sectors including constructions and customer service.
- It was highlighted that the data presented is not up to date however this was showing 25-34% of people on furlough. The Economy is where we expected it to be at the moment and we are seeing a significant rebound.

#### **09:55am      Update on Deep Dives – Hilary Stevens**

- Hilary Stevens circulated a briefing paper prior to the meeting on a recent deep dive that had been undertaken. The deep dive looked into the future of work. Hilary advised that data on the furlough scheme is included in the report but only up until July. It was advised that big national and high street names have announced closures which will affect redundancies however, concerns around those who are currently furloughed. It was advised that figures look ok at the moment but there is a concern that the job retention scheme is hiding this. It was advised that analysis on the future of working is included, this was published prior to Covid. It was highlighted that the percentage of 19year olds achieving level 2 qualifications is declining and the attainment gap between children on FSM and children not on FSM is also widening which are two causes for concern.

#### **Actions**

- **All to offer any feedback on analysis and offer any suggestions on improvements.  
To be sent to Hilary Stevens**

#### **10:10am      Update from Members – All**

- The points made about Apprenticeships were interesting. Unsure how we will obtain feedback from employers. Furlough is finishing soon, is this playing into the unemployment figures?
- It was advised that apprenticeships are significantly below expectations at the moment.
- Plymouth representative advised that not much enthusiasm has been received with the new kickstart programme and apprenticeships are also seeing a similar trend to what is being reported. It was highlighted that it is important to have real time information/data. 300,000 people in Plymouth are currently still on furlough which we are expecting to soon become unemployed. It was advised that a significant amount of work has been done in order to deal with the impact of those who become unemployed including the implementation of one stop website which more than 2,500 people have accessed. The biggest risk was reported to be the lack of resourcing and funding.
- A John Lewis / Waitrose representative advised that recently there have been many people returning to the office as restrictions have relaxed slightly however many people are still happy working from home. This is no positive impact on hospitality (wedding venues) outside of the city centre who are struggling massively. John Lewis/Waitrose advised that they are currently struggling with revenue due to the decline in footfall however online activity has increased by 75% which may mean that jobs will need to move elsewhere to meet demand. It was advised that many small businesses are now moving from supplying other businesses to supplying directly. Finally work experience placement opportunities for year 10/11's have disappeared during the pandemic.
- Exeter City Council advised that they are working with partners to ensure that they help/advise young people so they know what is going on around them and any opportunities that arise. It was also noted that there has been a significant decline in footfall within the city centre due to more people WFH and students not attending college/university which has had a significant impact for businesses.
- Exeter college representative highlighted that it is currently a challenging environment for employers to take on apprentices and work experience opportunities have also dropped.
- Somerset representative advised that they have recently rolled out a number of work experience packages online which has been positive. A moving careers fairs for post 16 year olds is being organised online for later in the year also. They are trying to make resources available more widely. One stop shop entitled step up which brings all advice and support to one place. Soon will be rolling out face to face hub as well. A business survey has been undertaken which is being analysed. Currently this survey predicts that we will see around 10,000 redundancies. It was advised that around 3000-4000 are expected to be unable to find work so the team will be looking at how to upskill these people going forward.
- It was advised that there are a number of national schemes currently available but it would be useful if organisations were able to be flexible in the way these were used to ensure this provide as much benefit as possible to those it would be supporting. Further concerns were highlighted around the number of NEETS.

- Devon chambers highlighted that there is a current concern with the cliff edge that is approaching. When furlough ends and VATs become payable there is going to be a surge in the numbers of unemployment. Businesses have advised that they find it difficult to give a meaningful experience so are not necessarily happy to provide work placements at the moment however they would be happy to provide an oversight into the business and opportunities available to ensure young people are mindful of what opportunities are out there. It was advised that Devon Chambers have registered as an intermediary for the new Kick start programme as they want to ensure that young people are given a meaningful work experience that can give them a real step onto the ladder.
- City Plymouth representative echoed that they also are concerned about when furlough ends and redundancies rise, how will apprentices be maintained and managed. There is an increase in adults wanting to change careers. Further there is a concern around digital poverty for those who cannot afford IT equipment if there was another lockdown.
- Training provider network representative highlighted that they have only had 50% of apprenticeships starting however there are a number of providers who are considering taking on a January cohort of apprentices. Trades seem to be doing ok at the moment. Independent providers are seeing a change in provision.
- A representative from EDF energy advised that they are working with the nuclear industry to achieve a blended approach to T levels. They are happy to share the current progress of this.
- Training provider network representative highlighted that there is currently a lot of confusion with all the information and incentives that are available. It is important to consider how this is communicated with employers. It was advised that the new kickstart scheme may affect apprenticeship start up and there is a concern that if the employer has a negative kickstart experience this may mean that they do not want to take on an apprentice going forward.
- DCC advised that partners are working together to pull the kickstart scheme into a coherent piece with how it will work. It was advised that DCC have also applied to be a representative for the LEP/DCC and act as an intermediary. The updated skills launchpad is due to be launched next week therefore the team would like to use this as a platform to share any comms on this scheme.
- It was highlighted that some positive statistics have been reported however there is a concern as we approach the winter months as around 2,000 businesses have reported that they do not feel they will be able to survive next Summer. It was highlighted that there are strong opportunities around platonics.

- Phill Adams advised that SAPs have been tasked with producing a formal skills strategy by March 2021. This will be a strategy where everyone will go to for skills documents. Government are expecting this to be used with employers and training providers. There is a 30-page limit therefore the document needs to be clear, specific, relevant, responsive and evidence based. This document will be updated annually with a full review taking place every 2 years, therefore it is essential that it is adaptable. Every SAP in the Country will have the same structure to follow. Evidence will be provided so we need to be mindful of this when agreeing priorities. PA highlighted the proposed timeframe for the document which included; October-December 2020, SAPs programme team provide support to SAPs on Local Skills Report as needed, January – March 2021, Local Skills Reports published, April – May 2021, guidance updated as necessary, November 2021 – Update Local Skills Reports published.

**10:30am      Discussion around the Skills Strategy – All**

- The strategy that was proposed was opened up to the group for discussion. Various points were made around this including the following.
- It would be useful for the strategy to align with what is going on nationally.
- It is key to understand the 5 – 10-year picture with job demand. Further it is important to link up with the LEP's on other major projects.
- Key priorities need to be identified and defined.
- Need to ensure alignment

**Action**

- **All to provide robust comments back to Phill Adams on what you see as your key skills priorities.**
- **PA to reissue the template for Skills Strategy and discuss joining up with Andy Berry/John Laramy**

**11:25am      AOB / Round Up**

**11:30am      Close**