

## Heart of the South West Skills Advisory Panel

29th March 2021  
from  
09:00am – 11:00am

### Via Microsoft Teams

#### 09:00am Welcome, Introductions and Declarations of Interest

##### Attendees:

- Fiona McMillan
- David Ralph
- Bill Blythe
- Stuart Elford
- Rod Davis
- Phill Adams
- Keri Denton
- Sharron Robbie
- Hilary Stevens
- Jackie Grubb
- Rosie Bates
- John Laramy
- Laurence Frewin
- Jo Holmes
- Helen Higgs
- Gabrielle Climie
- Chris Evans
- Sean Mackney
- Tina Brinkworth
- Nora Corkery
- Mark Sheppard
- Khristine Norton
- Katy Quinn
- Mike Green
- Tony Skeel
- Paul Blackmore
- Lee Tozer
- Victoria Gage
- Chris Young
- Nicola Williams
- Julie Hawker
- Suzanne Bond
- Victoria Hatfield
- Mike Matthews
- Mel Roberts
- Edward Coley
- Cheryl Ward
- Stephen Henagulph
- Joanna Caine
- Steve Cardew
- Carl Wyard
- Andy Berry
- Jacob Coburn
- Nicky Keast

##### Apologies:

- Rob Bosworth
- Alan Denby
- Jamie Evans
- Debbie Wright

#### 09:05am Minutes of Last Meeting

- Actions from last meeting:
  - There were no declarations of interest to report and all actions had been completed.

#### 09:15am Update on Impact of COVID – Phill Adams

- It was advised that the third lockdown has delayed the Recovery period from what was originally anticipated however predictions forecast that places may bounce back slightly quicker than originally anticipated. It is anticipated that some parts of Devon will see a much slower rate of Recovery than others.

- It was highlighted that sectors including retail, food and accommodation as well as arts and leisure have been hardest hit. However certain retailers such as food stores, household good stores and non-store retailing have seen a significant growth during the pandemic. Retailers such as textile, clothing and footwear stores and automotive fuel have seen a decline in sales.
- It was advised that claimant count figures have doubled since the pandemic. Currently it is not known what unemployment figures will look like when furlough ends.
- It was reported that there are lower percentages showing of businesses becoming at risk of insolvency than were predicted during the second lockdown.
- Overall, it was advised that we are seeing a bounce back however they are some areas who are showing real concerns and will need close monitoring going forward.

### **09:20am      Update from ESBs and Members – All**

- Mark Shephard advised that the non-food side of retail has seen 10 years' worth of change in 1 year. John Lewis stores will reopen with extended opening hours however 70% of trade is expected to be online so making this profitable is difficult. Going forward it is going to be important for businesses to have an online presence.
- John Laramy advised that Exeter is second nationally for having the lowest claimant count. The skills bootcamps have had a positive uptake and the number of apprenticeships currently available is really positive.
- Rosie Bates advised that the kickstart scheme is up and running within Exeter. The team are currently using resources to support young people onto these courses. Still working through to understand the impact on claimant count.
- Stuart Elford highlighted that it can be difficult for some businesses to get an online presence. For a strong recovery this will be vital for businesses so support with this will be beneficial.
- Mel Roberts advised that they have appointed across the 4 LEP areas to run 24 technical bootcamps which will be delivered in the next financial year. The team are currently acting as a gateway for the kickstart programme. ESF programme is currently being mobilised and the team are providing redundancy support for employers and staff who are currently being affected by shop closures or reducing staff. With the announcement of Debenhams closing down, the team are looking into ways they can support the large amount of staff who have lost their job. Finally, work is currently ongoing to look into applying for the Community Renewal Fund which they will be bidding for up to £12million.
- Rod Davis advised that they are currently seeing an increase with the number of vacancies and apprenticeships becoming available. There has been a large take up with the bootcamps that have been offered. Also seeing a large amount of internship enquires. There has been a large amount of interest from businesses regarding the skill up offer. Finally, the team are currently working with the Council to put together a process for steppingstones.
- Katy Quinn advised that full time students applying for courses is up by 45%, currently unsure why this is. Currently receiving applications for apprenticeships however employers are waiting for the right time to appoint apprentices.
- Jacqui Grubb highlighted that apprenticeships in certain areas are very buoyant at the moment, this includes cheffing, Teaching Assistant roles and customer service. Similar to before they are unsure for the reason behind this.
- Tina Brinkworth highlighted that roughly 700 job vacancies were advertised during lockdown. The team are aware there will be a large skills gap which they are trying to prepare for.
- Laurence Frewin advised that Torbay are gearing up for a staycation boom. Kickstart is starting to gear up and bootcamps are going really well.

- Sean Mackney advised they are seeing a mixed picture. There has been an increase in demands in health and construction however there has been a decline in arts, etc. There have been many students who have not yet applied for further education so this is being looked into.
- Bill Blythe advised there is a concern with the reduction of footfall within highstreets since the pandemic. Hospitality is starting to reopen which is positive. Brexit is now being discussed in a negative light due to the difficulties that have been faced with exporting and importing goods, especially in engineering.
- Sharron Robbie advised the group that TPN are working with Devon Chamber regarding providing wrap around support for the kickstart programme. The team are currently keeping an eye on employers who are not taking up the offer of the wrap around support. Sharron highlighted that the issue is a large amount of graduates have taken up these offers and therefore employers do not feel they need to provide extra support. It was advised that the number of apprenticeship offers becoming available are increasing and the second wave of the bootcamp programmes take up are going well. Sharron advised that employers are being offered £3,000-£4,000 for apprenticeships so this is felt could be the main reason for the increase in offers becoming available. Currently the team are trying to get SME's involved and interested in taking on apprentices. Finally, Level 3 offer for adults launches on 1<sup>st</sup> April with over 370 courses available. Sharron advised she could provide more detail if required.
- Michael Green advised that there is a mixed picture with small businesses. Some are embracing the digital opportunity and now have great profits however others are holding off and waiting. It is important we try and encourage these businesses to come on board with an online presence. Brexit has had an impact with the supply chain for some businesses. One business has frozen trade because they cannot guarantee the dispatch date of their product and it will be ruined if there is a slight delay.

#### **09:50am      Local Skills Report – Phill Adams**

- Phill Adams provided an update on the Local Skills report. It was advised that this was endorsed by LEP Board on 22<sup>nd</sup> January and has now been signed off by every major board and partnership.
- The report is due to be published on the SkillsLaunchpad website on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> March. All comments received have been integrated and built into the text including business emphasis and demand put first, additional references to Skills White Paper and LSIPs, evidence base reordered to better meet DfE indexing, reference to primary education added, Western Somerset is now Taunton, Bridgwater, Western Somerset and Mendip and general cuts to text length in places.
- Phill advised that this document should be used going forward.
- Questions were raised around if the LIS should also be used? It was advised that Guidance from DfE suggests this should be used.
- PA advised that quarterly updates will be provided to review the action plan and the main report will be updated and refreshed every 3 years.
- PA updated the group on the Community Renewal Fund. It was advised that every district/Upper Tier Authority can bid for up to £3million funding.
- It was advised the capital programme for the LEP is coming to an end, currently unsure if any money is coming forward. Further it was advised that the minister for education and skills has advised they will be visiting soon to gain more information about the bootcamps.

**10:05pm      Careers Hub – Progress and Challenges – Victoria Gage**

- Victoria Gage joined the meeting to provide an update on the careers hub and share with the group the successes the team have had as well as the challenges they have faced.
- VG advised that since 2018 the team have expanded. The extra capacity within the team has seen an increase in the number of Enterprise Coordinators which has allowed operational work to be more evenly distributed.
- VG highlighted that since 2019 the Gatsby Benchmark's have seen significant progress. Unfortunately, due to Covid, Gatsby Benchmark 6 (experiences of workplaces) has been unable to develop in line with the others. In addition, the number of Schools and Colleges engaged with the careers hub/EAN has significantly increased since 2019. Finally, the proportion matched with an EA has also increased since 2019.
- VG advised that although there have been many successes there are also many challenges that are faced including young peoples mental health. Careers helps young people to see beyond Covid. It also informs them about education and careers pathways and it raises their aspirations and allays fears about their futures. It was also advised that some schools are not engaged in the career hub which is a challenge to get them on board. Finally, there is a lack of Enterprise Advisors available for SEND schools.
- Opportunities that were identified include, embedding careers in school improvement plans. Leverage messages in skills for jobs white paper. Work with existing destinations data provider. Increase LEP Board Member organisation representation. Identify a Cornerstone employer for Torbay. Develop contacts within growth sectors and find EAs for SEND schools.
- John Laramy advised that it would be useful to have numbers/names of the schools that are not engaging so this can be looked into
- Paul Blackmore questioned if there is an opportunity for students to act as peers. It was agreed that Victoria and Paul would take this offline.

**10:35am      Social Mobility Deep Dive – Hilary Stevens**

- Hilary Stevens provided an update on the Social Mobility Deep Dive. It was advised that there is a link between social mobility and equality. Many people believe it is becoming harder to move up the ladder if you are from a deprived background.
- A timeline of the key milestones was presented to the group, this is available within the slide deck that was circulated. HS advised attendees to keep an eye on these.
- It was advised that a social prosperity working group has been organised. This group have met up three times (November, January and February) since the group was agreed last year. This group is acting as a shadow group who are laying the foundation for a inclusive prosperity expert pane. The key themes from this group include recruiting a secretariat; embedding social inclusion into projects and planning; joint bidding opportunities and evidence gathering.
- It was advised that the social mobility project in the South West is a year long project which will be commencing in March 2021. The project is funded by the Cobalt Trust and will be based at the Graduate School of Education at Exeter Uni. Will Harvey and Anne-Marie Sim will be assisting with the project.
- The key areas that the project will be focusing on are diagnosing what the key social mobility challenges are across the South West and determining how this should be addressed and what actions should be taken to improve this.
- It was advised the next steps include a consultation which will be based around the four broad areas of policy highlighted in the Lee Elliot Major and Stephen Machin report about "what do we know and what should we do about...social mobility?"

- Hilary highlighted that it is important to ensure actions and policies promote collective success, enable people to live decent lives, improve the prospects of people in different communities and promote fair access to education and work.  
**Action: All to offer any feedback to Hilary Stevens**

**10:25pm**      **AOB / Round Up**

There was nothing further to report.

**13:30pm**      **Close**