

Heart of the South West Skills Advisory Panel

24th May 2021
from
09:30am – 11:30am

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

09:30am Minutes of Last Meeting

- Actions from last meeting:
 - There were no declarations of interest to report and all actions had been completed.
 - Fiona McMillian advised that she will be stepping down from chairing the SAP meetings going forward. Vince Flower will be the new chair of the meetings going forward.
 - Stuart Elford advised a Declaration of Interest with the Skills Accelerator bid.

09:45am Update from ESB and Members – All

Mark Shepherd advised that they are seeing a good bounce back since lockdown has started to ease however this is not being felt everywhere. It was highlighted that JL sales are down by a third however food and drink is still doing well. Professional sectors are doing well however hospitality sectors are struggling especially with their labour force. The sector is trying to encourage the international resource back again. There are growing concerns with the outcome highlighted by Government next week.
SM-R to share youth voice document from Mark.

Mike Matthews advised that reports show there are a lack of skills people to support current vacancies. The team have signed up for kickstart however there has not been a massive take up with this. It has been reported that there is a shortage of HGV drivers and the hospitality sector is picking up again however there are a lack of people to fill posts.

Phill Adams advised that the team are identifying some unusual trends as sectors start to reopen however they are currently unsure of the reasons behind this. Any intel would be useful to know about so please contact Phill/Jamie Evans directly.

Bill Blythe advised that they are noticing an increase in Universal Credit claims and are also seeing a similar patten with businesses struggling to fill vacancies therefore they advised that they will be holding a recruitment fair to try and address this.

John Laramy highlighted that there is a struggle to recruit to admin roles at the moment. The Skills Development pilot is being worked on at the moment so if this is successful it is hoped this will help fill the gap.

Tina Brinkworth advised that there is a significant skills gap in the city. 97% of people on furlough will be going back to their previous jobs and the other 3% are claiming. Paul Turner will be the new chair for the ESB from 3rd June. Currently 123 kickstart placements have been filled however there is difficulty to fill places.

Beccy Brown advised that £22million worth of CRF applications have been received. Many of these have an employment and skills focus. The team are working to create a pipeline of projects to submit to Government. Kickstart is slow. ESF have submitted a bid to extend the NEETS programme until 2023. Redundancies are not happening in the same volume as was originally thought.

Jo Caine advised that the labour market is interesting at the moment. There is a stead rise of vacancies across the market, within the Exeter area there are currently 7,000 jobs being advertised. Sectors struggling to fill roles include hospitality, retail and care. There is a lack of move in the market as many people want stability. Employers are now facing issues with growth plans. Redundancies appear to be minimal at the moment. There is a difficulty engaging 18-24 year olds with kickstart programmes and there is a struggle obtaining enough work placements for year 10 students.

Sharron Robbie highlighted that the skills accelerator and CRF bid have been submitted. L2 apprenticeships are down at the moment. L3 apprenticeships have excelled and L4 apprenticeships have accelerated. It was advised that many companies are struggling to recruit at the moment. An example was that 3 construction companies had called advising they are struggling to get apprentices. Sharron questioned if more value should be added to traineeships where the young person is paid to try and encourage this? Wrap around support for kickstart is being given to businesses currently engaged in this however a high calibre of people are applying for these roles and therefore not requiring this support.

Sharron advised that the apprenticeship scheme are currently working through their data therefore if you are signed up to the scheme you will be contacted in due course and asked to re-apply. It was advised that the purpose of this is to raise apprenticeship standards.

Stuart Elford advised that more young people are opting for kickstart positions due to the difference in pay. The team have approved 724 kickstart placements and have received an exceptional standard of applicants.

Phill Adams updated the team on the outcome of the Skills Accelerator pilot. It was advised that Devon have submitted a bid and surrounding areas will be submitting a similar bid. Bootcamps have proven to be a great success.

Stuart Elford emphasised the team effort that has gone into the LSIP bid. He highlighted that this was really positive and wants to ensure regardless of the outcome that this team working attitude remains going forward.

10:25pm Social Mobility Deep Dive

Hilary presented to the team the reasons behind completing the social mobility deep dive. It was advised that social mobility is important for a number of different reasons including the following; it is unfair for individuals who are unable to realise their potential, connections with concept of equality of opportunity, damaging to overall economic prosperity and cognitive diversity improves decision making. In order to address social mobility, Exeter University are completing a deep dive programme to understand/acknowledge good practice already taking place as well as raise awareness to local stakeholders of this issue to help reduce this as much as possible. The deep dive process will include the following; a research brief, consultation to allow stakeholders to highlight current and future activity, event to celebrate and share examples of good practice as well as sense check recommendations for further action before finally completing a synthesis report.

It was advised that the research brief has already taken place therefore the next stage is the consultation. Exeter University advised that they are looking for examples of best practice, a varied picture of what is already being done and to gather as much evidence as possible. This includes gathering examples of strategies, programmes, research, collaborative work which can all be shared as ways of best practice to improve social mobility.

It was advised that the next stage of the process following the cons would be the virtual event. This is being held on Wednesday 30th June at 1pm. There will be various speakers attending the event to feedback a summary following the consultation findings and share good practice as well as finding practical solutions to help overcome social mobility.

Action: All to offer feedback, complete the consultation form (this can be conducted as an interview if preferred, please contact Gabi Climie), cascade to networks and raise awareness of social mobility.

Action: All to provide recommendations or volunteers for speakers to lead on 'what works' for the virtual event - particularly in need of Torbay/Plymouth perspective, employer perspective, and adult learning perspective. All to share and promote the deep dive activity.

10:50am Digital Skills Partnership Update / Bootcamps

Charlotte Collyer joined the meeting to update on the digital skills bootcamps. The Digital and Technical bootcamps are testing new employer-led training for adults funded through the Government's National Skills Fund by DfE. Currently we are testing the short intense training to help people advance or pivot their skills into growth sectors resilient to the current economic downturn.

Wave 1 took place between 1 January to June 2021 with a £2.2million budget for digital and technical skills delivery and will have targeted 890 people. It was reported that the wave 2 is running from July 2021 to March 2022 with a budget of £1.8million for technical skills delivery and will target 719 people and the Wave 2 for digital skills delivery will be running between August 2021 to March 2022 with a budget of £1.5million and will target 766 people. Each bootcamp is a short sharp intense programme that is held over 12-16 weeks. A number of organisations are involved with delivering the various courses on offer. The purpose of the bootcamps is to allow people an intensive retraining opportunity to get into a new career with a guaranteed job interview at the end. The skills training courses that have been offered have been specifically designed to meet high demand skills shortage vacancies.

It was advised that bootcamps with lower completion rates were at a higher level so it is thought that the application process was not robust enough, this has now been revised ahead of the next wave. Next step is to ensure that at least 75% of learners secure a new role, progress within their current role or expand their business if they are self-employed within 6 months. To help with this two virtual jobs fairs have been organised with local employers. These are being held on 26th May and 14th July.

Charlotte advised that they are currently working with KS3 pupils to educate them about digital skills. It is difficult for schools to fully engage with this due to capacity constraints with the curriculum therefore schools are receiving a newsletter with consolidated information for ease.

Action: All to contact Charlotte Collyer if interested in attending the upcoming virtual job fairs.

11:10am Exeter Skills Centre

Dr Natalie Whitehead and Dr Alice Mills joined the meeting to discuss why the Heart of the South West needs a science centre. It was advised that proposals are in place to build a science centre in Exeter after noticing this as a need within the area. The mission of this is to educate, motivate and empower the public to make a difference in the world.

There have been various motivational factors to prompt this including climate and ecological emergence, low aspirations and poor progression to HE as well as gender disparity and a growing concern of mis and dis information due to a lack of trust in science/scientists. It is therefore believed that a science centre in the city can help with the following areas; increase education and aspiration, disseminate and exchange knowledge and provide additional culture. Dr Whitehead and Dr Mills pointed out that the closest science centre to Exeter was in Bristol therefore there is an opportunity if the right site can be found.

It was advised that the charity now have a growing list of supporters including University of Exeter, Met Office, Libraries Unlimited, Prism Exeter, Tech Exeter etc. More information can be found on their website at exetersciencecentre.org. It was advised that next steps include growing the team, organising a public consultation, growing the consortium of stakeholders, fundraising, continuing with projects to connect public and schools with STEAM research and industry and acquiring funding for a feasibility study and earmark a potential location.

Action: All to get in touch if interested to know more/get involved with this project

11:25am AOB

There was nothing further to report.

11:30am Close