



Productive Skills 4 Devon

Held on Monday 12th April 2010, 2pm
Heathfields, Newton Abbot

Minutes

Present:

Name:	Organisation:
Andrew Lightfoot (Chair)	Devon Economic Partnership Executive Officer
Adele Dawson	South Devon College
Andrew Ashley	Enterprise Plymouth
Ben Nield	SLIM
Charlotte Hanson	Community Council Devon
Craig Marshall	Devon and Cornwall Training Provider Network
Daniel Bailyes	Devon Economic Partnership
Daniel Lewis	Apprentice Champion
David Rowe	University of Plymouth
Deborah Passmore	Torbay Council
Frankie Upton	National Apprenticeships Service (NAS)
Ian Hat	Exeter College
Jen Brogan	Devon County Council
Joan Farleigh	Job Centre Plus
John Davey	Careers South West
Julia Foster	Devon County Council
Liz Wood	Devon County Council
Nick Holmes	Devon County Council
Phillip Oldfield	Exeter City Council
Russell Endean	DEP (Temporary work placement)
Trevor Day	PS4D Consultant

Apologies:

Name:	Organisation:
Caroline Murphy	Train to Gain (Business Link)
Chris Lorimer	Exeter College
Deborah Fraser	Devon Education and Business Partnership
Graham Morris	Plymouth Employment and Skills Board
John Willis	Consultant
Kate Foster	University of Exeter
Liz Abell	Devon Renaissance
Margaret Davidson	Devon County Council
Mary Graves	Skills Funding Agency
Michael Cozens	South Hams District Council
Philip Done	North Devon Employment and Skills Board / WFDG
Sally Kittle	Job Centre Plus
Steve Pitcher	North Devon +
Tim Jones	Devon and Cornwall Business Council
Tracey Hill	Intergria

1. Welcome/Introductions

Andrew welcomed those present and allowed introductions from everyone present. Mary Graves was also introduced (although not present), as the new link with the Skills Funding Agency. Adele took the opportunity to promote the venue, which is a new management centre for South Devon College that opened in September, to enable the expansion of Part Time learning for those in work. The centre is keen to host more meetings to allow it to get on the radar; as such, partners need not pay for the venue, only food. Adele also extended an invitation for the use of the facilities, with various brochures available in the reception.

2. Young People and Skills

Andrew introduced this theme with the reminder that 19-24 yr olds are suffering disproportionately with unemployment, growing 3x as rapidly.

2.1 Overview of Apprenticeship Opportunities (Frankie Upton, National Apprenticeships Service)

The National Apprenticeships Service (NAS) was launched in April 2009, and is one part of the new structure, which includes the abolition of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and creation of the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA).

The changes and formation of NAS came as a result of the Leitch review in 2006. To meet future demand for skills, the number of people in apprenticeships needed to increase from 1 in 15 to 1 in 5. NAS has end-to-end responsibility for this.

There are three teams within NAS who work together to achieve these targets. There is (1) The Learner Services Team; (2) The Employer Services Team; and (3) the Apprenticeships Vacancies Team. Details of the first two teams can be found on this link:

<http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/About-Us/National-Apprenticeship-Service/Employer-and-Learner-Services.aspx>

The vacancies team operate the online system. Here suitable vacancies from employers are advertised, with registered learners linked to appropriate opportunities. For more information, please visit the website:

<http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/>

From 2013 every school child will be able to choose an Apprenticeship as one of many options. NAS is charged with this provision.

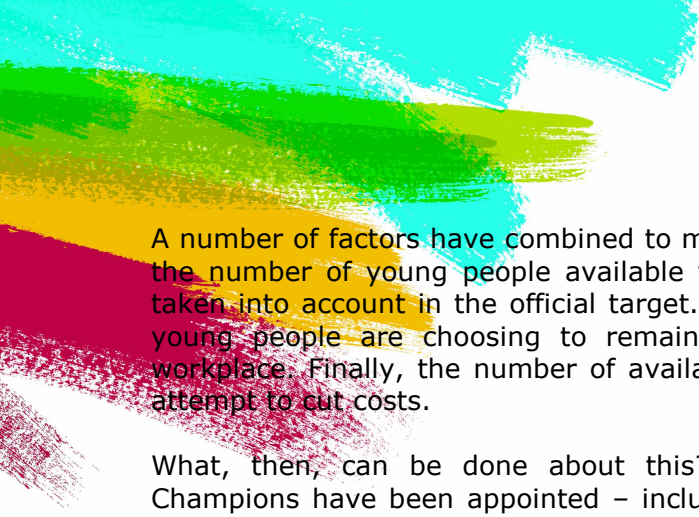
Members of this group, and other interested parties, can register on the website as partners (click on the link below), and have access to a range of useful features, including details on marketing, data, publications...

<http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Partners.aspx>

2.2 Experience of Apprenticeships (Craig Marshall)

Apprenticeships will still be around following the general election, and Craig will provide a summary of the question and answer session held with David Willets, the shadow Universities and Skills Minister.

Overall, the South West has shown an 8% increase on last year's recruitment. However, this is still 13% below target. That the South West is the best performing region in the country demonstrates the difficulties that currently exist. Although as a region we are performing well, there is still a long way to go.



A number of factors have combined to make achievement of our target a real problem. Firstly, the number of young people available for apprenticeships is declining, yet this is not being taken into account in the official target. Moreover, with the current economic situation, more young people are choosing to remain in education for longer, rather than entering the workplace. Finally, the number of available employers has also been on the decline as firms attempt to cut costs.

What, then, can be done about this? Craig reported that a number of Apprenticeship Champions have been appointed – including Daniel Lewis. They will promote apprenticeships to young people making their post 16 choices. A large collection of case studies is also being compiled for the benefit of both young people and employers. This will be active soon, and can be found on: www.swtpn.com.

Adele suggested that employers also need to act as Champions if we are to increase the number of employers taking part in the scheme. For South Devon College, the main problem has been that the number of young people wanting to start an apprenticeship exceeds the number of employers available.

Andrew Ashley reported that many Small and Medium Sized Enterprises are put off employing an apprentice by the paper work that is involved. Is there a way this can be reduced or simplified? Frankie reported that work has been ongoing to reduce the bureaucratic footprint of the service. However, there will always be a degree of bureaucracy, and some of that will be general employment paper work. Bureaucracy is easy to blame.

Andrew Lightfoot also requested that the group suggest any other networks that could be used to promote apprenticeships. The Devon Tourism Skills Network (Jen) and the Women do Business Network (Charlotte) are happy to explore the issue. Adele reported that the press have been utilised by South Devon College, raising the issue of young people failing to access apprenticeships due to a lack of available employers. This may be an option for other parts of Devon.

Craig introduced the group to Daniel Lewis, who is an Apprenticeship Champion and welcomed any questions from the group that he could answer.

- What kind of support is provided for Apprentices? There are a number of component parts within an apprenticeship including technical certificates, functional skills, a breakdown of employer rights and responsibilities and anything else required by the industry. Daniel reported that he works for a training firm, and staff provide support during the working day.
- What attracted you to do an Apprenticeship? With unexpectedly low A-levels, Daniel was keen to enter the world of work and learn whilst earning a wage.
- How did you hear about Apprenticeships? The careers advisor at school promoted the option, along with PHSE lessons. However, Daniel learned more about Apprenticeships from Connexions than through the school.
- Would you [Daniel] choose to go straight into an Apprenticeship if you could start all over again, or would you study A-levels again before moving into an Apprenticeship? Daniel answered that, if he could have his time again, he would go straight into the Apprenticeship.

2.3 Future Jobs Fund Provision (Andrew Lightfoot)

The Partnership's Future Jobs Fund (FJF) scheme in Devon and Torbay has an allocation 314 jobs, and has filled 112 vacancies to date; other (national) FJF schemes have filled 284 places in Devon. There is funding available to transfer FJF placements into Apprenticeships, which is being explored in conjunction with the PS4D money (below).

2.4 Scope for additional Investment by PS4D

£150k is still unallocated from PS4D's revenue reward grant. There is very little money available for 19+ apprenticeships – perhaps this is where PS4D money could be directed? Discussions were continuing and a proposal will be worked up before the next meeting.

3. Project Update

3.1 Research (Ben Nield)

The process is underway, with phase 1 work currently being completed (collecting data / analysis / desk research). It will lead to the production of 5 reports (4 covering the local ESB areas and 1 covering the whole). When phase 1 is complete discussions will be had with local ESBs regarding phase 2 developments.

Andrew Lightfoot also reported that the South West Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (SWRIEP) have offered £24k for further work in Plymouth, Torbay and Devon – a good complement to this work.

The work currently being compiled by DCC, PCC and Torbay Council on the Local Economic Assessment also fits into this work.

3.2 Employment and Skills Boards / Workforce Development Groups

Deborah P reported that South Devon and Torbay Employment and Skills Board have recently appointed an apprentice, which sets a good example for others to follow. The Workforce Development Group is also working on an Employers Guide to Training, which will live on the ESB website. A marketing campaign will begin soon, with the launch due in early May.

Philip reported that a coordinator has been appointed for the Exeter and Heart of Devon (EHOD) ESB from PS4D reward grant money, to begin in April. Richard Ball has been to Bristol to look at their Skills Shop, and to see how it could be rolled out here.

In Graham Morris' absence, Andrew Ashley reported that the Plymouth ESB's focus is upon science, technology and engineering. However, there may not be enough consideration of SMEs.

3.3 Other Projects

The Young People's Employment Support Scheme by Exeter College will be launched in May. The contact for that is Chris Lorimer.

The Women Do Business scheme has already exceeded outputs. PS4D funding allows for a pan-Devon service – if anyone has any ideas as to where geographical support could be located, they would be welcomingly received by Charlotte.

The Devon School for Social Entrepreneurs now has 19 students, and funding seems reasonably secure for the coming year.

The EARTH project at Bicton College is safe according to assurances from David Henley.

Craig also reported that the servers are currently in the process of being transferred as part of the project to develop a single Virtual Learning Environment.

4. Organisational Changes

4.1 Skills Funding Agency

Information on the SFA can be found on the Devon Economy website:

<http://www.devoneconomy.co.uk/national-skills-landscape>

4.2 Young People's Learning Agency

Information on the YPLA can also be found online, including details of the 14+ Learning and Skills Strategic Team at Devon County Council:

<http://www.devoneconomy.co.uk/14-skills-landscape>

4.3 DEP / DRN Organisational Changes

An outline proposal has been put to the DEP meeting on Wednesday 21 April for further discussion. The proposal can be found online:

<http://www.devoneconomy.co.uk/assets/PDFs/DEP/DEP%20Future.doc>

5. Provision for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

The ability to speak English is key for all those living and working in the UK. It is necessary for employment, access to services and wider community cohesion. The New Approach to ESOL seeks to maximise community cohesion by reaching those least able to access current ESOL provision.

The government have made a number of changes over the past few years to ensure that those able to pay for English language learning provision do so, and that government funding is focused on those most in need. This included, for instance, the removal of automatic fee remission to focus funds on those least able to pay and to ensure that those who benefit from migration meet their share of the costs.

As part of this New Approach to ESOL, local authorities and their partners, being in the best place to assess local need, have been asked to identify the people in their areas that struggle the most to integrate, and to find ways of reaching them. Local authorities and their partners have been asked to work together to identify:

1. key priority groups in local areas;
2. issues that are preventing the priority groups engaging or progressing in their learning; and
3. actions (individual and collective) that partners need to take to address the issues

There have been three meetings of the group since the first in December 2009, bringing together a wide range of partners from the public and community and voluntary sectors. The minutes of the meetings can be found on the Devon Economy website:

<http://www.devoneconomy.co.uk/new-approach-to-esol>

6. Notes of last meeting

Passed without comment.

7. News round-up

- Jen used the opportunity to promote subsidised training for tourism and hospitality businesses, spring-summer 2010.
www.devontourismadvice.co.uk
- Short data analysis is available on the SLIM website on LESB areas.
- Liz Wood would like to be invited back to report on work being done on the learning disabilities agenda.



8. Date of next meeting

16 June 2010, 2pm
Venue to be confirmed

Future meeting dates:

12 August 2010, 2pm
Venue to be confirmed

3 November 2010, 2pm
Venue to be confirmed