

Productive Skills for Devon

Held on Friday 17th July 2009, 2pm
Job Centre Plus, Pynes Hill, Exeter

Present:

Tim Jones (Chair)	DCBC	Andrew Lightfoot	DCC/Devon Economic Partnership
Philip Oldfield	Exeter City Council	Rosie Bates	DCC
Liz Abell	Devon Renaissance	Steve Smith	DCC
Tony Skeel	LSC	Michael Cozens	South Hams District Council
Andrew Ashley	Enterprise Plymouth	Craig Marshall	Training Provider Network
Robin Makeig-Jones	North Devon +	Sally Kittle	Job Centre Plus
John Davey	Connexions	Geoff Hallett	Devon Education Business Partnership
David Rowe	University of Plymouth	Lucy Gough	DCC
Ben Neild	SLIM	Jay Talbot	Community Council of Devon
Philip Done	NWDWDAG	Colin Wadsworth	North Devon College
John Willis	PS4D Consultant	Trevor Day	PS4D Consultant
Siobhan Wright	Exeter and Heart of Devon Workforce Development Group		
Debbie Passmore	Torbay & South Devon Workforce Development Group		

Apologies:

Graham Morris	Plymouth Employment & Skills Board		
Kate Foster	University of Exeter	Caroline Murphy	(Train to Gain) Business Link
Julia Foster	DCC	Peter Harding	Community Council of Devon
Chris Lorimer	Exeter College	Margaret Davidson	Adult & Community Learning

1. Welcome and Introductions

Tim welcomed the group and thanked Job Centre Plus for hosting the meeting. Introductions were given around the table.

2. Future Jobs Fund Proposal

The draft proposal had been previously circulated to the group. The scheme is to create employment opportunities for young people aged between 18 and 24 who have been unemployed for at least 12 months. The proposal covers both Devon and Torbay and at the moment includes 136 jobs across private, public and third sectors, primarily in the Torbay, Exeter and North Devon areas. These have been identified as the initial clusters of need, with the scheme hopefully being gradually cascaded out around the county.

The first deadline for submission was 30th June, but GOSW requested additional information the day before so it will now be submitted at the end of July instead.

Thanks to Debbie Passmore and Philip Oldfield for getting information about the scheme out to employers.

Generally, the first round of submissions included a number of national bids, but with not a lot included for the South West. There is also a need to identify specifics and the community benefits of the jobs.

Tony gave an update from his perspective, as he is on the regional panel looking at the bids. There has been a good response, considering the work has been done with very little criteria. It is a 3 stage process – Panel, Board and then Regional Minister. The Minister for the South West, is also the Minister who is responsible for the scheme nationally, so it is likely that he will want the scheme to be up and running quickly in his area. There will also be encouragement to submit subsequent bids for increased numbers. In general we should be identifying employers who are keen to employ young people.

There may be an element of national moderation, as good national bids will need to dovetail into local schemes. It will be interesting to see the Minister's expectations.

There are still some questions around contract management – not sure yet how tight this is going to be. There are potential capacity issues if it is very tightly managed. It could be a relationship between the employee and partners. There will need to be management infrastructure put in place.

The figure of £450 for mentoring and support is flexible – the figure is an average as it is recognised that individual needs will vary.

3. Future research – follow up to SLIM presentation

At the last meeting, Ben presented the latest report from SLIM and since then a group has met to discuss possible future analysis. The original format of the reports was agreed before the recession, local economic assessments and worklessness assessments. It may need to be changed in light of these developments.

While the report is useful, the information can be quite dry as there is currently no real analysis. It is not the job of SLIM to provide solutions, but more analysis of the terrain and the situation could be included, to try to suggest how and why the data is like it is. There could also be a more dynamic element, looking at trends now and what we can expect in the future. Responsibility now tends to lie with the Employment and Skills Boards (ESBs) – therefore data and analysis is needed at that level – this would be possible.

A number of suggestions were given for possible areas for further work:

- Seasonal variation – and then could anticipate trends
- Focus on inactive groups including types of benefits, length of time receiving benefits
- Age
- Occupation of claimants – this could coordinate with data on redundancies which is available down to Parliamentary constituency level.
- Vacancies – what/where/how many – this could help further Future Jobs Fund proposals.

Discussion around these suggestions followed:

- In North Devon there is debate about whether Leader 4 funds should be focused on established or start up businesses. Data on the number of start ups would be useful. Business Link might have data on this.
- Primary research could contribute, particularly for demand side factors. We need specific aims/questions that we are going to look at, and then base research on those.
- Both worklessness assessments and Local Economic Assessments are/will be a requirement so work will need to be aligned with them.
- A report on barriers to training and skills development in rural areas has recently been done by SLIM and is available on their [website](#)
- There is a lot of profile on young people at the moment, both 16-18 and 18-25, so perhaps more work should be done on them. They have a different profile around previous employment. This would also help Future Jobs Fund proposals.
- Work on young people should not be done at the expense of the over 50s. There is a great fear over redundancies and consequently more of this group are moving into self employment. There is a lot of support for young people compared to middle aged and older people. Numbers in this group will be significantly higher by the end of the year.
- Work should be done on those furthest from the workforce, in terms of age, culture, BMEs. Should look at those that are workless and then break this down into categories – potential workforce and those furthest from workforce.
- There are also links to be made with children in poverty work
- Could look at pressure on existing infrastructure with additional people staying in education or returning to it.
- Any further work needs to be linked to the 7 themes of the PS4D Delivery Plan and the priorities identified by the ESBs.

Action: Ben to have more detailed conversations with representatives from ESBs and others to decide on appropriate way forward.

In general the report needs to be a livelier document, including more predicting trends – employment, wage levels for particular skill sets, emerging opportunities. Case studies of individuals could be used to bring statistics to life. The Devon Renaissance Business Survey should be able to provide case studies.

There also needs to be a livelier process around the report with more time for discussion about actions. Suggested that the report be presented individually to each ESB.

4. Updates from Local Employment and Skills Boards and Workforce Development Groups

Torbay and South Devon (Debbie Passmore)

- Chair is being recruited over the summer – to be in place by October
- Have been in contact with Cathy Heath from South Devon Coastal LAG re: match funding for Tear Scheme.
- Good engagement from Employers Group.
- Looking at doing some skills and potential funding mapping through SLIM. SLIM are currently talking to all ESBs about local priorities as they are working on the Skills chapter of the Single Regional Strategy.

Exeter and Heart of Devon (Tony Skeel and Siobhan Wright)

- There is a need to support the development of employers who are active and committed to the ESB.
- Have tried to raise the ante – and have challenged members to start to think about what they want to do to address issues – they need to start to commission tasks.
- Prioritisation exercise currently being done – waiting for response and then can identify priority areas so that work can start by September based on these.
- Need to think about what kind of activities the ESB wants to take on and how employers can engage with schemes.

North West Devon Workforce Development Group (Philip Done)

- Work being done to identify where the gaps are in terms of worklessness or development.
- Have a clear picture of where interventions can be made to be effective.
- There is an opportunity for these ideas to be validated by employers – a need for an ESB in North Devon.

North Devon (Robin Makeig-Jones)

- ESB is starting to develop with the development of North Devon+ Board – the ESB will be a sub board to that. North Devon+ Board is being recruited this week.
- They are building a business support strategy looking at all availability – draft ready by end of July.
- They are looking to provide the context for the ESB and then allow them to set the agenda in order to shape and refine it.

Plymouth (Andrew Ashley)


- Business Plan with consultants – ready by end of September
- Retail Skills Academy – funding approved for consultancy.
- Creating a set of benchmarks to measure how they are doing.

Tony reported that there is interest in the Devon structure, with PS4D and then the local ESBs. At national level, papers have been published by Dept of Business, Innovation and Skills on the importance of ESBs – they are here to stay and we need good engagement. Devon has already made a good start in this regard.

Trevor is attending a regional meeting convened by the Regional Skills Partnership to look at ESBs and SW Councils view.

Still questions over geography – it has been a struggle for Plymouth to engage with its travel to work areas. Cooperation has now improved with Devon, but there are still some issues with Cornwall.

It would be good to communicate best practice within the county. There is also the Regional ESB Network.



Cllr. Christine Channon, new DCC Cabinet Member for Schools and Skills sits on the Regional Skills Board. Andrew is doing a briefing on skills for her at the end of the month.

5. Learning Transformation Fund – John Willis

Summary of bid was previously circulated to the group. John Willis gave the group an overview

Bid has been submitted by Devon County Council, on behalf of the Devon Community Learning Partnership (DCLP). They are asking for £100,000 to be spent by end of March 2010. Community learning is generally about personal and community development, but there is a lot of overlap with workforce development and developing skills for work.

If the bid is successful, they want to increase the promotion of informal learning opportunities, engage more learners and promote community development. There would also be links with volunteering. The money would be used to fund engagement activities with a range of organisations – lots are already signed up. They would also fund a part time development worker. Hoping to link into the developing website suite Live Devon/Invest Devon and the DEP website and possibly develop a Learn Devon website to provide a portal into other activities. Work would be targeted at disadvantaged communities, so linking to the PS4D Delivery Plan.

There was then further discussion around the table:

- Potential linkages to CCD, North Devon College and Team Devon
- There are still problems with IT connectivity in rural areas, so there could be issues around accessing materials.
- However, Greater Dartmoor LAG is supporting Northlew in setting up their own internet line. A package will be created that could be used in other areas so this is a potential solution.
- Also, Devon Renaissance has been commissioned by DCC to map hot spots and slow spots and to suggest possible solutions.
- Need for soft skills development package to be included.
- Potential link to community hubs proposal and green development training.
- Is a separate website necessary? Could funds not be better used elsewhere? However, the idea is to develop a site that is not linked to any particular provider.

John hopes to hear the outcome of the bid in a few weeks time.

6. Business engagement

There is the potential for money from both PS4D and the wider DEP to address this recurring issue. There are opportunities across Devon to improve relationships. A number of approaches that are used could be shared and piloted in other areas, both for skills and wider economic issues.

- Business engagement is more difficult now than it has ever been, due to the current economic situation. Increasing engagement is to do with personal credibility and the integrity of the networks that you run. Businesses will continue to be resistant unless our act is 'jazzed up'.
- Robin reported that in North Devon they are engaging with priority sectors – marine/tourism/creative etc. It is never just about skills, but a range of things including business support.
- The Devon Renaissance Business Survey received 3000 responses, with good geographical and industry spread. What was their motivation in responding? Liz suggested that businesses want to engage but just can't at the moment.
- The Blackdown Hills Business Association has 3000 members and uses a bottom up approach. They are highly engaged with micro enterprises – perhaps this approach should be explored further.
- There are also lessons to be learnt from CCD's WAM project.

- Suggestion that there should be community based support/engagement, rather than priority sector based engagement. The general majority of businesses need support for particular issues. They need direction and for issues to be framed in the right terms.
- As we are only able to make a small investment we should focus on 2 or 3 priorities in this area.
- Rosie reported that the Tourism Skills Network has engaged successfully with businesses.

Action: Rosie to write a background paper on business engagement within the Tourism Skills Network

- It is important that training be broken down into small chunks, allowing businesses to pick and choose to suit their needs. There is a need for a good interface – to get information about new offers out to businesses.
- A lot of businesses know that they need skills, but are unlikely to do anything about it unless it is made very easy for them. We need to be proactive and improve information sharing and information flows.
- DCBC uses a pyramid selling method and through this touches 40,000 businesses.

The group agreed that further discussion was needed at the next meeting on this issue.

7. Potential locations for new/enhanced 'skills centres'

Centres would be multi use – such as the Watermark Centre in Ivybridge. This same model is now being looked at for Kingsbridge. There is also a successful model in Torbay.

We need to get a good view of what is happening over the next 5 years – next conversations with Economic Development Officers across all Districts.

Action: If anyone has any suggestions of particular venues, please send them through to Lucy (lucy.gough@devon.gov.uk)

8. PS4D Budget

A paper had been previously circulated to the group. Tony explained that it was similar to one circulated before, but with the addition of the LPSA money on page 1 and the questions on page 3. Tony emphasised that they are keen to continue Partnership working and not let the group break down due to squabbles over money.

The paper has identified 5 key areas for consideration, and there are **indicative** amounts against each one. This is not an attempt to ring fence money for certain ideas, these are not exclusive pots, but there are going to be more activities/ideas suggested than we can support. The main activity areas will be areas 3 and 5 – Community Outreach and Innovation.

The money has to be spent by March 2011 so we need a process for agreeing the use of funds. The emphasis remains on working collectively and not highly competitive bidding.

ESBs and Workforce Development Groups, once clear about local priorities, will begin to create ideas about things that need to be resolved. It would be useful if these groups could prioritise and cost these ideas. Where there are county wide ideas – they can link up. However there is a need to manage the expectations of these groups as there are going to be a lot of demands on this money.

The money can be used to match something else or we could seek match funding from other organisations. The money could be used in some cases as leverage. Comment was made that there is more money available through SW Councils than before – Sue Smith could be contacted to discuss match funding.

Liz offered to help with structure if needed as she has experience of dealing with funding bids through Devon Renaissance. It is important to determine your primary objectives early and to

ensure that the process is carried out in a fair way as by keeping partners engaged you will be able to deliver more.

Tony asked that proposed ideas be based around the following questions:

- Brief description of the project/activities
- Project value and contribution required through PS4D
- Partners involved
- Outcomes/Impact

If each area could produce a plan and list of ideas alongside any countywide ideas then this would be useful. Don't spend hours on proposals – need to identify opportunities.

If initial ideas could be submitted to Andrew Lightfoot (andrew.lightfoot@devon.gov.uk) by 31st August, then a group will meet to look through them. This is not a final deadline, but will need to see what stage we have reached. If the process becomes impossible then we will have to decide on a new system. However as we have not got long to spend the money – decisions will need to be made fairly quickly.

9. Minutes of the last meeting – 22nd May 2009

Minutes agreed by the group.

10. News Round Up

JD – 30th Sept – Devon Worklessness Group meeting, looking to work with young people/NEETs – anyone interested in attending contact John Davey or Janet Sinclair.

MC – his name has featured in Hansard through work with the Post Office Network Task Group.

LA – Greater Dartmoor LAG funded the Business Improvement through Skills project which is being delivered by West Devon BIP. Also supporting CCD's Women Do Business project.

LA – happy to do a presentation on Skills findings from Business Survey at next meeting.

DR – now have increased capacity in the team, 3 advisors now rather than just him.

Action: David to circulate information about access to this service to the group.

CW – very large response to redundancy programmes and 6 month unemployed programmes.

JT – CCD conference on October 21st at Christow. The subject is the Changing Rural Economy and if anyone is interested in either speaking or attending, please contact Charlotte Hanson.

SS – DCC has Beacon status for Commissioning whilst Cornwall has Beacon status for Child Poverty, so currently working to develop links, possibly also with Cumbria. Hoping to access EU funds for support.

CM – Train to Gain contracts out for next year, but will not be smooth delivery as will deliver 47% of training in last 4 months.

PD – Osborne Project now expanding rapidly wherever there is kitchen space available. Good links with the Probation Service. These links need to be developed in wider work too.

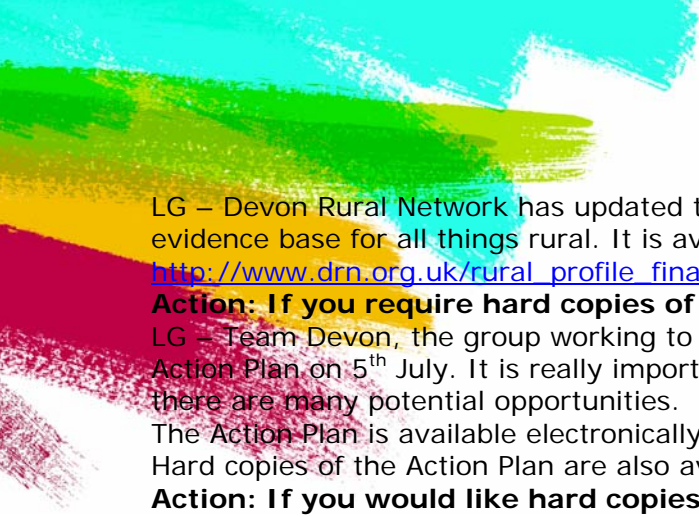
SW – Exeter Positive Steps project started in Exeter St Davids is now operating in Wonford/Priory area. Courses will be starting in September in areas where people have expressed an interest.

SK – successful Employment Advice and Training (EAT) events in Plymouth – looking at those facing redundancies and that have not yet been through the Job Centre's doors. Looking to take events into Torbay in September and then expand further.

RMJ – produce a bi-weekly newsletter, if you have training opportunities to advertise then please send them through to be included. Also, ND+ sponsors the North Devon Journal Business Page so if anyone has any good, positive business skills stories these would be welcomed.

LG – Currently carrying out Equality Impact Needs Assessment for Economy theme of the LAA. Skills has been identified as area that needs more detailed examination. Need to gather information about the diversity of people attending training courses, developing skills, benefiting from services, survey results, consultation findings etc. Trends can then be analysed to see if there are any equalities gaps that need addressing.

Action: All to send through any existing equalities data that they have to Lucy.



LG – Devon Rural Network has updated the Devon Rural Profile. This provides a useful evidence base for all things rural. It is available electronically at:
http://www.drn.org.uk/rural_profile_final_july_2009.pdf. There are also hard copies available.

Action: If you require hard copies of the Devon Rural Profile please contact Lucy.

LG – Team Devon, the group working to promote Olympic legacy in Devon, launched their Action Plan on 5th July. It is really important that businesses and communities are engaged as there are many potential opportunities.

The Action Plan is available electronically at www.teamsouthwest.co.uk/devon

Hard copies of the Action Plan are also available.

Action: If you would like hard copies of the Action Plan to distribute to your networks, please contact Lucy

10. Date of next meeting

Next meeting due to be held on Friday 25th September at 2pm, Okehampton Business Centre