



Leading learning and skills

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES FOR ACTION THROUGH DEVON'S LPSA2 AND LAA

Introduction

There has been significant change over the last couple of years within the government agenda on skills. This has required major shifts within and between organisations and there needs to be a response at a local level. A clear Devon-wide approach has been created but this must not be at the expense of localised delivery that fits more comfortably into travel to work areas. From the consultancy work and discussion between key stakeholders over the last year or so ten key actions have emerged. These are set out below.

Following a period of development a number of achievements have been made -

- Activities and priorities were discussed and agreed.
- A series of baselines were developed.
- A broader period of development was initiated, through consultants, which created a wider understanding of the targets and associated actions and placed them within a Devon environment.
- The LPSA2 work has subsequently be re-aligned into the fourth block of the Local Area Agreement.

The priority now is to continue that re-alignment and –

- Bring stakeholders more closely together in terms of planning and delivery.
- Co-ordinate and link delivery across a variety of government funded initiatives.
- Create a specific identity for Productive Skills for Devon under the Devon Economic Partnership.
- Ensure that there is a shared approach between the skills and the environment agenda to bring consistency to LAA block 4.
- Develop an intelligent and analytical process that enables a joint approach to prioritisation and local target setting.
- Initiates projects that fill the gaps that have been identified.

1. Skills brokerage services

With the instigation of a south west approach to skills brokerage through Business Link organisations there is now a need to ensure this new service is dovetailed into the current delivery of brokerage, advice and other support for employers and individuals. Many of these existing services have a track record and will need to be understood in a new context alongside Skills Brokerage. For example, and there are many more-

- a. The current LSC funded activity through NextStep which provides IAG (Information, advice and guidance) to adults has a remit to work both with individuals and through the employer.
- b. There is a growing network of Trade Union Learning Reps who may not strictly be *brokers* but they certainly act as champions within the workplace.
- c. The work of Enterprise Agencies has a role in terms of business support which needs to be defined or re-defined to link into the developing pattern of business support. This should recognise the important role that Enterprise Agencies play as an initial contact, particularly for SMEs.
- d. Learning providers themselves, whether LSC funded or not, undertake a marketing and promotional role which is not brokerage but could appear to the employer to be undertaking a similar purpose.
- e. There is a need to respond to demand for higher level skills often delivered as short programmes through HE.

All of this needs to be given a high level of clarity in defining the respective roles to ensure there is a minimum of duplication and the whole approach maximises the level of support. This would be supported through mechanisms which have clearly defined approaches to; 1) engagement and supporting individuals alongside an approach to 2) working through the employer. They may have similar outcomes but the approaches are different.

Proposed action

Pilot work should be undertaken in the 2 areas of Torridge and EHOD to find a 'fast track' solution to these problems. The approaches will be different and developing a model in Torridge, a rural area lacking in infrastructure will complement the work in the more developed EHOD area.

Lead agencies – Business Link (Alison Cox), LSC (Tony Skeel).
Potential funding routes – LSC approx. £25,000

2. Development of enterprise and work-related learning.

The development of a coherent phase of learning across the 14-19 age group presents considerable challenges not least of all in the diversification of the delivery of learning. This is exemplified in the role, an increasing role, that employers will be encouraged to play in support of work-related learning and the roll out of Specialised Diplomas. The challenge is steepest and most complex in the very rural areas and in particular those areas experiencing a lack of economic growth; businesses are literally concentrating on survival.

Currently there are areas of untapped potential that could be maximised in support of this work;

- Exeter University and its work on innovation has not been fully utilised.
- The business support network provides a clear link into SMEs – particularly the very small – and through the development of a joint approach a coherent approach could be presented to employers.

Proposed action

Additional activity should be undertaken through the Education Business Partnership contract to supplement their work in building links between schools and employers. This should be undertaken in Torridge; an area characterised by poor infrastructure and a weak local economy, typified by SMEs to develop an enhanced service that links existing provision through DEBP and locally delivered enterprise education.

Lead agencies – Devon EBP (Geoff Hallet), DCC (Trevor Day)
Potential funding – a bid for £11,250 has been submitted to Devon Renaissance.

3. Review of the physical capacity to deliver skills

Over the next 5 to 10 years the physical infrastructure that supports the delivery of learning will need to change. The impetus from both the 14-19 reforms and the LSC's Agenda for Change to make learning for people of all ages more responsive to employer need will create a challenge to the current physical infrastructure. It has been suggested that an identified network of 'skills centres' across Devon linking into the existing provision could create a more robust infrastructure.

Proposed action

Review existing infrastructure across Devon and produce a report of potential gaps in infrastructure for recommendation for further work.

Lead agencies – DCC (tbc), LSC (Tony Skeel), RDA (Louise Tyrie)
Potential finding – £20,000 LSC, £10,000 LPSA Pump-priming

4. Development of a 'learning offer' for Job Centre Plus clients.

In order to meet the principles of social inclusion, the development of a learning offer that is flexible enough for Job Centre Plus is important. Such provision would complement the existing activity provided by Job Centre Plus through New Deal and Skills Coaching and also learning provision with the clients of the Probation Service. A process should be developed to ensure any learning and / or training needs required by Job Centre Plus clients and other potentially marginalised groups are shaped into a coherent programme. The LSC's role should be to support a mechanism through which its providers are encouraged to deliver the required provision.

Proposed action

Develop a pilot model that creates a responsive process to ensure learning provision is delivered that meets the needs of Job Centre Plus clients. This should be piloted across northern Devon and linked to the provision through the Skills Coaching Pilot.

Lead Agencies – LSC (Tony Skeel), Job Centre Plus (tbc)
Potential funding – approx £50,000 LSC (Across Devon and Cornwall)

5. Development of a coherent offer to Public Sector workers.

The LSC has prioritised the development work of learning within the public sector. There is a genuine opportunity to build on existing partnership working and develop best practice. The public sector often has a sound reputation in terms of staff development but has been relatively slow in fully engaging in staff development opportunities for example, activity in relation to level 2 qualifications, or higher skills through HE delivered by the Centre for Leadership at Exeter University.

Proposed action

Develop an approach to encompass Devon County Council and the District / City Councils in delivery of learning and skills priorities to their staff.

Lead agencies – LSC (Tony Skeel), DCC (Anne Barnett)
Potential funding – LSC approx £50,000 LSC (Across Devon and Cornwall)

6. Sector-based initiatives

There are a range of sector-based initiatives covering all or part of Devon. This plethora of activity represents a good basis for further work but a more strategic approach needs to be devised. Through the baseline work undertaken through the consultants a number of priorities emerge. An annex has been created that begin to analyse the priority sectors and the projects that are currently active against each. What emerges are gaps within specific priority sectors.

Proposed action

Initiate the two proposed Sector Task and Finish Groups

1 – Construction skills across Devon

2 – Engineering within north Devon.

And maintain the Exeter retail programme

Adopt the sector-based approach and agree actions to fill skill gaps.

Lead agencies – to be agreed

Potential funding – see appendix which is a developing document and is work in progress.

7. ESOL / Migrant Labour

The south west has a relatively underdeveloped infrastructure to support the delivery of ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages. The demand for ESOL learning is rapidly changing and the need is now much more likely to be from migrant labour. The requirements and prior learning of these potential learners is different from traditional ESOL demand. Managing this activity, particularly through some of the key sectors, has become and remains a challenge.

Proposed action

Develop an approach to ESOL delivery in East / Mid Devon which responds to the needs of migrant labour in land-based and food processing / production sectors, for example. This will include development of the delivery infrastructure as well as defining employer demand.

Lead agencies – LSC (Tony Skeel), DCC (Trevor Day)
Potential funding - LSC approx £35,000

8. Develop a resourcing strategy.

There has been a significant on-going debate linked to the LAA on resources and budget alignment / pooling. As a minimum it would seem possible for government funded agencies to 'table' their level of investment within Devon to gain a broader understanding of funding levels. This would be the first stage to alignment of such budgets against existing and emerging priorities. This should also encompass a proposed approach to the use of any reward money successfully secured through LPSA2.

Proposed action

All government funded agencies sign up to the principle of a resourcing strategy and show the level of investment in the financial year 2006-7.

Lead agencies – DCC (Andrew Lightfoot)
Potential funding – not applicable

9. Develop detailed indicators in support of LPSA2 activity.

The baseline data and progress reporting is at the Devon-wide level. There is a need to develop further, more subtle, indicators below the four headline indicators. This will ensure that local differences can be analysed and additional support can be targeted very specifically. This will also enable work to be joined up into the two unitary authorities. There should also be a link to other activity that is implicit within LPSA2 and the LAA to gain a more complete overview. This could be facilitated through a single data analysing system such as Mega nexus to produce a regular update on the important indicators that underpin economic performance in Devon.

Proposed action

- Create a baseline against each LPSA2 activity at district / city / unitary level.
- Create where possible a sector-based baseline against each of the eight sectors set out in the annex.
- Agree the list of further indicators that support LPSA2 to include demographic analyses on age, gender and migrant labour for example which will link across to other LAA activities.

Lead agencies – DCC (Andrew Lightfoot, Steve Smith, and Jamie Evans), LSC (Tony Skeel)

Potential funding – LPSA2 pump priming funds approx £5,000

10. Communication strategy

Some initial activity has been undertaken that begins to site the work within a broader context and raises the profile of *Productive Skills for Devon*. This work needs to be rolled out to complement other activity through the Devon Economic Partnership.

Proposed action

To agree three clear actions from the work of the consultants to take the work forward over the next 12 months.

Lead agencies – Chair (Tim Jones), DCC (Steve Smith)

Potential funding – LPSA2 pump priming funds approx £10,000

11. Infrastructure development

There has been a struggle in translating the plan into action. This has been particularly relevant at the sub-Devon level where the engagement of partners is vital. There is now a need to develop the capacity to work with partners to engage them in local activity.

Proposed action

Support three consultants in the re-invigoration of local workforce development groups to cover; Exeter and the Heart of Devon, north & west Devon and Torbay & south Devon. Each will carry much of the workload in supporting localised projects.

Lead agencies – DCC (Trevor Day)

Potential funding – LPSA2 pump priming funds £30,000

Annex – Sector-based priorities and actions

Sectors	Sector Skills Council	Project activity
1. Tourism & Hospitality	People First	Co-financing projects – Visiting Success through Torridge Training (ends Dec 06) - Skills Training for Tourism through Ultra (ends Dec 06) - Quality in Customer Care through South West Tourism (ends Dec 06) - Network Hospitality through PCFE (ends Dec 06)
2. Construction	Construction Skills	Co-financing projects - Constructive South and East Devon through CITB (ends Dec 06) Proposed LSC project – Sector Task and Finish Group across Devon
3. Health and social care	Skills for Health and Skills for Care and Development	
4. ICT (and also cross-cut)	e-skills	Co-financing projects - EEL Engineering E-Learning through North Devon College (ends Dec 06) - Better Business Through Computer Skills through Paignton Sec (ends Dec 06)
5. Food & Drink	Improve	Co-financing projects - SKILL through South West Food and Drink Skills Network (ends Dec 06)
6. Advanced Engineering	SEMTA	Proposed LSC project – Sector Task and Finish Group focussing on north Devon
7. Retail	Skillsmart	LSC project – Sector Task and Finish Group focusing on Exeter
8. Creative Industries	Creative and Cultural Skills	Co-financing project – TACSS through Devon County Council

Cross cutting themes	Sector Skills Council	Project activity
1. Marine		
2. Voluntary and community sector		
3. Business Services		
4. Environment		
5. Leadership and management		