

LEARNING CITY YORK

Board Meeting

Monday 22 October 2012, 10.00 – 12.00
Eccles Building (Burnholme Community College)



Attending: Jill Hodges (chair), Mike Saunders (York College), Lesley Booth (Uni of York), Julia Davis (JCP), Jessica Grant (Higher York), Laura Harris (Your Consortium), Annabel Jelley (SFA), Julia Massey (Learning City, CYC), Asif Mohammed (SFA), Martin Watts (York Museums Trust)

Apologies: Sarah Collinson (Babcock / National Careers Service), Jill Gibson (JCP), Alistair Gourlay (CYC), Sue Gradwell (NYBEP), Cllr Janet Looker

Minutes

1. Adult Skills Assessment of need (see presentation slides)

The original Adult Learning and Skills Strategy was devised in 2007 and now needs to be revisited.

The SFA commissioned a lot of research to be completed for the 4 LEPs over the summer, which gives a large evidence base to consider, with some focus specifically on York. We intend to develop a strategic vision to run until 2020, although detailed action plans will only be devised for shorter periods at a time.

In terms of employment and growth, industry in York has diversified. While business performance overall is high, productivity per person is low. Further forecasting work is needed, as the SFA funded research through Ekosgen did not take full account of the benefits accruing from all inward investment activities in York and transformational projects planned.

Headlines from presentation and discussions include:

- Economic growth and jobs created in York is likely to remain below the regional average (but this does not include activity through transformational projects)
- Manufacturing is seeing increasing demands for high-level skills, but a shrinking workforce.
- Many employers are more interested in taking on apprentices than graduates.
- Employers have noted that many candidates who get to the interview stage have similar qualification profiles and little to distinguish themselves from other candidates.
- It is hoped that inward investment will create more graduate-level jobs, which could free up more entry-level jobs.
- The role of IAG will be critical, and it is important that parents of young people are kept informed of the current situation.
- There are many skills that are common across most or all industry sectors, but there are others that are more sector-specific.

- Young people need to understand the high level of competition for all jobs, so any mistakes on an application forms will see it discarded, and the benefits of having extra-curricular or voluntary activities.
- IAG also needs to ensure that people have realistic expectations of what work is available, and that sometimes people need to take a step backwards in their careers in order to move forwards on a different path.
- A lot of opportunities at the moment are part-time or temporary contracts, which young people can find more attractive than low-paying full-time apprenticeships roles.
- Different target groups require different IAG / support eg: large numbers of adults currently employed but who are facing the threat of redundancy; those facing logistical barriers to employment, and can need considerable support to get back into work.
- Challenges remain around the basic skills deficit in York; York College noted that numbers doing level 2 qualifications post-16 have risen dramatically. To achieve the 2020 targets set out in the Leitch report, we will need an extra 2000 adults to achieve level 2 every year; we currently have 3000 adults starting that provision, but less than 2000 achieving annually and needing longer to achieve
- It was noted that employers are often looking for specific skills or qualifications rather than a whole package, and FE providers need to be aware of this possible disconnect.
- It was suggested that LCY focus resources first on sectors with the most potential opportunities.

Julia Massey agreed to bring together a small group to focus on this work by the end of November; Jessica Grant and Laura Harris volunteered to join the group, and **Mike Saunders** to discuss participation of York College with Alison Birkinshaw.

2. Round table updates

1. Your Consortium

City of York Council Community Grants have been launched and awarded (managed by Your Consortium, on behalf of CYC). £120k awarded across 14 organisations working on priority themes. **Laura Harris** to send details to the group.

2. University of York (Centre for Lifelong Learning)

A science project, funded by Wellcome Trust, is working with parents to link with the school science curriculum, giving progression opportunities. It is being piloted in a limited number of wards, but will hopefully be extended next year.

3. York Museums Trust

There is a major development taking place at the Art Gallery, which will create short-term employment opportunities during the building and refurbishment, and longer-term volunteering opportunities. There has been a fall in interest in the heritage sector from schools, and YMT is looking to do more with schools at all ages, and also giving a focus on adult education. The trust has taken on a regional role for museum development across Yorkshire.

4. Job Centre Plus

The first jobs fair, co-ordinated between Learning City, Future Prospects and JCP was held in October, with a lot of support from new employers. There is a big focus on youth unemployment, and these figures will be reported monthly. A lot of work is going

on around basic skills and identifying skills gaps early, and finding suitable opportunities for work experience.

5. Higher York

Is carrying out research into graduate opportunities; employability is a major issue for HE providers. The Your City Construction project is expanding, to provide more work experience and training.

6. York College

Enrolments at York College have increased, and the college is working with JCP in putting on sessions for graduates and older professionals. A complete review of adults skills provision is being carried out. A hundred new apprenticeships are being set up in conjunction with Vital Rail.

7. Skills Funding Agency

A new round of ESF funding will be available soon, a total of £13m across the 4 LEP areas, to be based on objectives for employment linked to the Ekosgen research. We need to ensure that these benefits are taken up by local residents and employers.

There will be challenges for employers around funding for 16–19 and 19+ schemes, which may result in changes to curriculum planning that do not always tie in with local priorities.

3. Adults Advanced Learning Loans (presentation by SFA)

The new policy will start in August 2013, whereby adults aged 24+ will have to take out a student loan to access adult education beyond level 2. The threshold salary for repayments would be at £21k, and the first payment not due until April 2016 at the earliest.

The proposal is currently going through the legislative process. The SFA needs to ensure that everyone in the sector is aware of these changes. The Student Loan Company is confident that it can cope with the expected number of applications, but it is not known how much impact the loans will have on take-up. The government has made it clear that there will be no public subsidy for adult education at level 3 or above. Learners will be able to access up to 4 loans for courses through an SFA-approved provider, on the condition that each one shows progression (although this may be waived in exceptional circumstances), and loans will be written off after 30 years, if the salary threshold is not meant.

BIS have published FAQs on their website, and draft funding rules. The loan contract will be between the learner and SLC, not the provider. Learners will have a 2-week grace period at the start of the course to withdraw before they are liable for the full year's fees. The SLC will pay providers directly every month, based on the number of learners accessing the provision. This could lead to some provision being withdrawn if low numbers mean that it is not financially viable, as there will be no general funding and potentially less opportunity to cross-subsidise some provision.

For adults in employment, the loan will only be available for up to 50% of the course fees, and it is expected that the employer (if relevant to the workplace) will fund the other half up front. Employers may choose to fully sponsor learners through courses, which would bypass the loan process. In 2010/11, SFA funded £19m of learning across Yorkshire & Humber that will not be funded under the new proposals, equating to 20,000 starts at level 3 and above, and the figure for 2011/12 is expected to be similar. This will be a significant

challenge for LEPs, as adult learners are likely to be resistant to paying for these courses, and if employers are fully funding them then there may be lock-in contracts for employees.