

Scrutiny review of raising the participation age.

Report by the Review Board

of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Nicola Boulter (Parent Governor Representative and Chair)

Councillor Kim Forward

Councillor Roy Galley

Councillor Francis Whetstone

November 2015

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 23 November 2015

Cabinet – 26 January 2016

Full Council – 9 February 2016



Report of the scrutiny review of raising the participation age

Contents

Recommendations	3
Overview	5
1. Encouraging Participation.....	7
2. Careers Advice	9
Findings	10
3. Participation Data Collection.....	13
Findings	14
4. Vulnerable Groups	15
Findings	15
5. Meeting Employers' Needs.....	17
Employability Passport	18
Employability Projects	18
Work Experience	18
Apprenticeships	19
Findings	19
6. Concluding comments	22
Appendix	23
Scope and terms of reference	23
Review Board Members:.....	23
Witnesses	23
List of evidence papers	24
Investors in Careers (IiC) Accreditation – November 2015.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Recommendations		Page
	Careers Advice	
1	All East Sussex schools should attain the Investors in Careers (IIC) standard for careers advice services, or an equivalent alternative, to demonstrate to Ofsted and ESCC that they operate careers advice to the standard required by the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance.	12
2	The Education Improvement Partnership Executive Committee should survey East Sussex schools to identify and disseminate examples of best practice for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) and in particular for the provision of work experience.	12
3	All schools should appoint a Governor as careers advice champion.	12
4	All year 10 pupils should be offered work experience placements in conjunction with local employers.	12
	Vulnerable Groups	
5	Schools, ESCC and its partners examine ways to support the 'next most at risk' young people who may not meet the official vulnerability criteria e.g. by expanding services in schools, subject to funding.	16
6	ESCC and its partners explore how mental health awareness and support services to vulnerable young people in schools and colleges could be enhanced.	16
7	Post 16 providers and ESCC take into account the difficulty some young people, from the northern and western parts of the county, experience in paying for travel to access suitable post 16 provision when targeting travel support.	16
	Meeting Employers' Needs	
8	Commend the idea of an Employability Passport and encourage its swift development. Work should be undertaken where possible to make the Employability Passport regionally and nationally accepted and recognised.	21
9	Promote a single point of contact for businesses eager to be involved in work experience opportunities possibly through the new Enterprise Advisor Co-ordinator post or expansion of the ESCC work experience service.	21
10	The Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES) be requested to seek to match the demand and supply of traineeships to identify whether current provision can be expanded, and together with partners, seek to moderate the high expectations of employers regarding apprenticeships.	21

11	Actively encourage the extension of the provision of Careers Fairs (including apprenticeships), following an evaluation of the Sussex Chambers events, to create a network of Careers Fairs to serve all schools across the County.	21
12	Seek longer term funding for the Skills East Sussex Enterprise Advisor project, upon successful completion of the pilot scheme.	21

Overview

1. Recent years have seen a significant national focus on improving education, training and skills for young people. The Education & Skills Act 2008 introduced a requirement for all young people to participate in education or training until the age of 18 thereby “raising the participation age” ‘RPA’. The aim of the Act was to ensure that all young people have an opportunity to develop the skills they require to succeed in their chosen career path, and to minimise the number of 16-24 year olds who become ‘NEET’: not in education, employment or training.
2. The Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee established this scrutiny review to examine whether East Sussex County Council (ESCC) is meeting its statutory duties under the Education and Skills Act and to identify whether any improvements can be made to increase participation. The aim of raising the participation age (RPA) is to ensure that young people remain positively engaged with education or training until at least the age of 18, offering the best possible opportunity of developing the skills that will enable them to pursue successful careers.
3. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has several statutory duties in relation to RPA and post-16 education and training. These include:
 - Promoting participation
 - Securing sufficient suitable education and training places for 16 – 18 year olds
 - Undertaking tracking of the participation status of all 16 and 17 year olds (and reporting this monthly to DfE)
 - Providing support to young people who are at risk of becoming NEET or who have become NEET
4. ESCC is held accountable by Ofsted for the performance of itself and other providers in ensuring young people’s participation in education, employment or training. However, ESCC is no longer directly responsible for providing general careers advice and guidance services. These have been the responsibility of schools and of Further Education (FE) colleges since 2011. These organisations work closely with, but are independent of, ESCC.
5. The responsibility for careers information advice & guidance (CEIAG) for 14-18 year olds (and subsequently 12-18 year olds) was devolved to schools and colleges in 2011. The Department for Education (DfE) published revised statutory guidance to schools, sixth form colleges and FE colleges in 2014, in response to concerns about the poor quality of careers provision. This followed an Ofsted report on careers guidance in schools.
6. ESCC has retained responsibility for providing specific careers information advice & guidance (CEIAG) to those young people at risk of becoming NEET (also referred to as vulnerable groups of learners) and to support and re-engage those who have become NEET. ESCC commissions the Medway Youth Trust, who are a registered charity, to provide these services via the Youth Employability Service (‘YES’).

7. Raising the participation age (RPA) is a very broad area of work, and it would not be possible for a scrutiny review to examine all the work that is taking place. Consequently, the Board decided that, in addition to asking the general high-level question of how far services were succeeding, it would pursue four specific key lines of enquiry. These were:
- **Careers Advice.** Investigate the quality and consistency of careers education information advice and guidance (CEIAG) provided by schools, further education colleges and school sixth forms. In particular, examine the impact of CEIAG and young people's views about its quality from year 8 (ages 12 to 13) to year 13 (ages 17-18).
 - **Data.** Examine how well ESCC collects information on the participation status of young people (tracking and destination data) to see how this may improve participation. Looking at measures to reduce the number of young people whose status is "Not known"; ensuring quality data and examining data sharing issues.
 - **Vulnerable Groups.** Review the help and support for vulnerable groups and examine the impact of services to re-engage and support them.
 - **Meeting Employers' Needs.** Investigate whether young people's skills meet employers' needs; are young people's aspirations matched with education, training and employment opportunities?
8. The Board is mindful of the financial constraints that ESCC and its partners face. In the formulation of its recommendations, the Board has endeavoured to ensure they are capable of implementation within existing resources, or by securing external funding. However, where necessary additional resources may need to be found.

1. Encouraging Participation

9. East Sussex performs better than the national and regional averages in terms of encouraging participation in education, employment and training for 16-18 year olds. Both the number of 16-17 year olds and the number of 17-18 year olds participating are higher than the national and regional averages. For example, performance in November 2014 showed:

16 year olds Meeting the Duty to Participate		
ESCC 96.7% (5344)	SE average 89%	England average 93.1%
17 year olds Meeting the Duty to Participate		
ESCC 86.4% (4844)	SE average 80%	England average 85%
Participation Status Not Known (at 16)		
ESCC 0.4% (24)	SE average 6.3%	England average 3.8%
Participation Status Not Known (at 17)		
ESCC 4.5% (254)	SE average 12.1%	England average 8.3%

(RPA dashboard information November 2014)

The latest figures (May 2015) show:

16 year olds Meeting the Duty to Participate		
ESCC 95.4% (5421)	SE average 93.2%	England average 94%
17 year olds Meeting the Duty to Participate		
ESCC 87.4% (5063)	SE average 84.1%	England average 86.8%
Participation Status Not Known (at 16):		
ESCC 0.8% (47)	SE average 3.3%	England average 2.4%
Participation Status Not Known (at 17):		
ESCC 3.3% (189)	SE average 7.5%	England average 5.6%

(RPA dashboard May

2015. <https://czone.eastsussex.gov.uk/supportingchildren/eet/post-16learning/Pages/neet.aspx>)

10. The number of young people who are NEET is consequently low in comparison with regional and national averages. ESCC also has good information about the majority of young people who are NEET and low numbers of young people whose status is unknown. This level of data collection means that ESCC knows the participation status of the majority of young people, which is consistent with a high performing service.
11. ESCC and its partners are performing well in terms of the Government's 'September Guarantee' that school leavers must be offered a place on a further education course, an apprenticeship or some other suitable training provision. ESCC is also meeting its own internal targets as set out in the ESCC Portfolio Plan.
12. This indicates that the system is working well in relation to 16 and 17 year olds which was echoed by Ofsted in its recent inspection of ESCC services. Ofsted did express some reservations about the offer for 18 year olds which were "*Too few older students attain Level 3 qualifications; the proportion of 18 year olds moving on successfully to education, training or employment is too low*". Concerns around this older cohort are being addressed by an action plan agreed by ESCC's Cabinet on 16 September 2014.
13. ESCC is meeting its statutory duties to promote participation in education, training and employment, and to identify and support young people who are not participating. Our overall performance is currently good, although as with all council services it is important to recognise that the need to make improvements alongside further efficiencies in coming years means that maintaining current service levels will present a challenge.

2. Careers Advice

Investigate the quality and consistency of careers education information advice and guidance (CEIAG) provided by schools, further education colleges and school sixth forms. In particular, examine the impact of CEIAG and young people's views about its quality from year 8 to year 13.

14. Schools and colleges across the county are required to provide good quality and inspirational careers information advice and guidance (CEIAG) to their students by the Education Act 1997 and by the DfE guidance published in April and August 2014. The provision of good quality CEIAG is informed by national and local best practice, and should reflect the evolving needs of local employers.
15. Since ESCC ceased to provide a universal careers service via its Connexions service, schools have had a greater degree of freedom in the way they provide careers advice. East Sussex Schools commission their independent careers advice from range of external providers, who provide independent (one to one) carers guidance for pupils. This has led to variations in the standard to which CEIAG is provided in schools and what is on offer to pupils. Some schools provide a great deal whilst others offer a minimum which could not be considered 'inspirational'.
16. ESCC's Standards & Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES) encourages accreditation for schools under the Investors in Careers standard (IIC) as a way of promoting consistency in the quality of careers provision. ESCC is currently providing funding for accreditation up until July 2016, but funding beyond this point has not been agreed. Accreditation is voluntary and currently not all schools have full IIC accreditation. Once accreditation has been achieved it is re-assessed every three years. The timescale between accreditation assessments means there is a possibility that standards may not be as high as they could be, despite a school having full IIC accreditation. Regularly sharing best practice through School Improvement Partnerships would help address this.
17. The Board investigated the quality and consistency of careers provision by examining the legislation, best practice advice and by talking to staff from the Standards & Learning Effectiveness Team. It visited two schools, the Priory School in Lewes and The Causeway School in Eastbourne to speak to staff and students about careers provision. The Board attended the East Sussex Youth Conference to seek the views of young people on the careers provision they had received and attended a meeting of the Increasing Participation Operational Group to hear the views of ESCC service providers and other partner organisations.

Findings

18. When the Board visited Priory School, Lewes students said that they particularly valued work experience opportunities and school visits from various professionals explaining what their jobs entail. Young people would welcome more opportunities for work experience. Students also emphasised the positive role that parents can play in providing careers advice. CEIAG provision at Priory School is led by a careers department where every child undertakes a recognised qualification in careers and business (GCSE in Business and Enterprise). The Board found the staff passionate about their work to ensure all pupils had a post 16 offer and none were left NEET.
19. The Board also visited The Causeway School, Eastbourne to talk to staff about careers provision. The school has recently commissioned an external careers provider to review its careers provision to ensure that it supports its pupils in the best possible way. Staff at the school are passionate about their work and highlighted the importance of tutor groups to ensure pupils receive the support and careers advice appropriate to their needs. Staff also commented on the positive impact of the support the Youth Employability Service (YES) offer young people when they come into the school and in their wider work to support participation.
20. The Board attended the March 2015 Youth Conference. Young people at the conference told Board members that the provision of careers advice and guidance was not consistent across East Sussex. There were particular concerns that work experience was not being consistently offered across schools in Hastings, and in some schools not at all. More generally work experience was only being offered to students intending to take more vocational subjects. These concerns were echoed by comments from young people who had received support from the YES.
21. Evidence to the Board suggests that careers provision in county schools is inconsistent in the way it is delivered and what is offered to pupils at individual schools varies. Access to work experience is a particular issue. A survey of school websites also showed a wide variation in terms of the career advice, information and activities being offered. Many schools deliver CEIAG as part of the Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Citizenship curriculum which is taught by a range of staff. Having specialist staff and identifying lead practitioners to co-ordinate CEIAG delivery has the potential to improve provision.
22. The use of a quality standard such as Investors in Careers (IIC) is a pragmatic approach to ensuring consistency in provision across the county where there are many providers and organisations involved in CEIAG. Currently 22 secondary schools and community college schools out of a total of 27 have full IIC accreditation, and 6 out of 9 special schools have full IIC accreditation (a full list of the accreditation status of schools and colleges is contained in the appendix of this report).

23. Achieving IIC accreditation is not mandatory for schools, but it does provide robust evidence of the way in which a school meets the statutory guidance for careers provision. Those schools who believe that they can offer a better approach than that set out in the IIC standard, should be asked to demonstrate that they have an equivalent or superior alternative.
24. There is evidence of good practice and shared careers provision organised at a school level through local Schools Improvement Partnerships. However, it is not clear whether good practice examples are being shared more widely across the county. The existing Education Improvement Partnerships and CEIAG networks are the obvious vehicles to do this, as well as the opportunity to explore whether it makes sense for schools to further pool or share resources to provide specialist support. In other subjects Teaching Schools have been used as a way of spreading best practice, which could be applied to CEIAG.
25. Further Education (FE) colleges employ their own qualified careers advisors, but tend to work in isolation from each other. This may be as a result of the increased competition between colleges for students and the financial pressures the Further Education sector is under. The FE colleges have agreed to work through the established CEIAG network to ensure better links between pre and post 16 CEIAG provision and transition between schools and colleges.
26. It is important that schools treat careers advice and guidance as a high priority. However, the need to achieve consistently higher academic results creates competing demands on the time available in the curriculum, on pupil's time and the demands placed on school resources. Some schools have identified a Governor 'champion' to lead on careers provision. If each school adopts this approach, it would ensure that there is an influential leader pressing the case for high quality careers advice in every county secondary school.
27. The consistent message from young people was that what they valued most from careers services was one-to-one careers advice and high quality work experience opportunities. However, young people and schools reported that many pupils had given up part time work and other outside interests in order to meet the academic work demands of their school courses. This has implications for the employability skills employers are looking for, and supports the proposal develop an Employability Passport for young people (see section 5).
28. Young people who spoke to the Board also stressed the important part that parents can play in offering careers advice. It is important that there is additional support for young people who are unable to rely on this type of parental support. It may be that particular schools can offer examples of best practice in terms of encouraging parental involvement. The YES is considering developing 'parental ambassador' roles, to encourage parents to help other parents to provide this kind of guidance and support. Another possible avenue would be to provide this type of support at Children's Centres.
29. The Board heard evidence from the Youth Employability Service (YES) and its service users about its work to support and re-engage young people. The Board was impressed by the work of YES and the contribution they make. It is evident that their work is having a positive impact on increasing participation levels, and the evidence suggests that the number of young people who are NEET in the county would be much higher without YES services and support.

30. The Board also heard evidence from the Standards & Learning Effectiveness team about the value of starting careers education much earlier in primary school, rather than just before secondary school students choose their GCSE options. This lies outside the remit of this review, which is focused on secondary and post-16 education, but is something that the Board suggests the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee bears in mind when considering the future work programme of the Committee.

Recommendations

- 1) All East Sussex schools should attain the Investors in Careers (IIC) standard for careers advice services, or an equivalent alternative, to demonstrate to Ofsted and ESCC that they operate careers advice to the standard required by the Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance.**
- 2) The Education Improvement Partnership Executive Committee should survey East Sussex schools to identify and disseminate examples of best practice for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) and in particular for the provision of work experience.**
- 3) All schools should appoint a Governor as careers advice champion.**
- 4) All year 10 pupils should be offered work experience placements in conjunction with local employers.**

3. Participation Data Collection

Examine tracking and destination data collection to see how this may improve participation. Looking at measures to reduce the number of young people whose status is “Not known”; ensuring quality data and; examining data sharing issues e.g. obtaining access to HMRC employment data to find out when young people are in employment.

31. ESCC has a statutory responsibility to collect participation data on 16-18 year olds and pass it on to the DfE. Since some groups of young people are more likely than others to disengage from education, employment or training, it is important that local services are able to identify and target support for those at most risk. It is equally important that ESCC and its partners know which initiatives are most effective so that we have a sound evidence base for planning future services.
32. In collecting information about post-16 participation, ESCC starts with a data set of all young people in year 11. The participation status of each of these young people is initially set as ‘unknown’ at the beginning of September and then updated as information comes in from colleges and other education and training providers.
33. ESCC also receives information from Jobcentre Plus on young people known to them who may be claiming benefits or have been referred to national re-engagement schemes. However, there are some problems accessing information on young people who may be in employment or who stopped claiming benefits to move into employment.
34. The Youth Employability Services (YES) provides a commissioned service to support young people back into education, employment or training. Part of the work of YES is to contact those young people whose participation status remains ‘unknown’. This work is carried out by telephone, social media and by using other techniques to see if young people are participating or need support.
35. YES also works with schools, using the Risk of NEET indicator (RONI) assessment tool to identify those considered most at risk of becoming NEET, and then provides targeted support to this group. The Medway Youth Trust have a careers service called “Trust Careers” which schools can buy in to support those young people who are next most at risk.
36. The Department for Education (DfE) publishes destination data for each school and local authority. This details how many pupils went on to higher education (‘A’ levels) further education, apprenticeships, employment without training and those who are NEET. However, the latest published data available is for 2012/13, which is of little use to schools and other providers.

Findings

37. Data collection across East Sussex is good and meets the requirements of the Department for Education (DfE). The current high levels of performance mean that it is unlikely that investing more across the system would significantly improve identification of the relatively low number of 'unknowns' (estimated at 0.8% of the total in May 2015). The number of 'unknowns' is generally more of an issue with 18 and 19 year-olds than with 16-17 year olds who will typically have been assigned a place at college, although some may drop out soon after the start of their courses.
38. However, there may be a case for targeting investment in specific areas where reporting is relatively poor. For example, it may be worth doing more in terms of identifying students who do not fit in the formal categories of vulnerability, but who are in the next most at risk groups (for example those on the GCSE C/D grade boundary).
39. Whilst there are no obvious major improvements to be made to a system that seems to be well run, it is important to bear in mind that coming years will see all council services expected to work more smartly as funding is reduced and re-prioritised. The Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service will therefore need to explore whether it can deliver similar levels of quality more efficiently going forward (e.g. enhanced data sharing with Job Centre Plus and HM revenue and Customs (HMRC) to improve the understanding of the number of young people in work without training).

4. Vulnerable Groups

Review the help and support for vulnerable groups and examine the impact of services to re-engage and support them.

40. Whilst anyone can potentially end up NEET, a disproportionate number of those who become disengaged from education and training are members of 'vulnerable' groups: for example, young people with mental health problems; people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND); or young people who come from the most deprived backgrounds. Young people with a history of offending are much more likely to become NEET than the average. Looked after children (LAC) are also at greater risk of becoming NEET.
41. There is a good deal of support for young people in these vulnerable groups. For example, ESCC has a project to improve the education of looked after children; and the Youth Offending Team (YOT) has identified participation in education or training as a key objective of its work with young offenders. ESCC's Inclusion Service provides support for young people with SEND and also supports schools to tackle non-attendance and behavioural issues.
42. ESCC's 'Excellence Strategy', which is designed to improve educational attainment across the county, has targets to narrow the gap between the educational performance of students from more deprived backgrounds (e.g. those eligible for free school meals) and others.
43. The Improving Participation Operational Group (IPOG) is a co-ordinating group which brings partners together to work on improving participation across the county. When the Board met with IPOG, they heard that organisations were seeing rising numbers of vulnerable young people requiring support.

Findings

44. There are a number of organisations working to improve participation, both in terms of local initiatives and national programmes. Whilst much of this work is of excellent quality, the number of functionally separate programmes is a worry. There needs to be careful coordination to minimise duplication and ensure that there are no gaps in provision, particularly in terms of integrating national and local initiatives. Services would be easier to coordinate and target if there was more local control of national employability and re-engagement programmes.
45. Many of the initiatives to improve participation are based upon short-term (2-3 year) funding. Practitioners report that this can mean that programmes have little time to bed-in and that it is difficult to measure the longer term impacts of interventions.
46. The Board heard that the cost of travel to college or apprenticeships can present a real barrier for people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is likely to be particularly so for young people living in the rural areas of East Sussex, given that the majority of training and work placement opportunities are in coastal areas. Proposed changes to the ESCC post-16 Transport Policy may further impact upon participation here.

47. The Review Board visited the Youth Employability Service (YES) at their offices in Eastbourne and spoke to YES Advisors and service users about their work. Anxiety and mental health issues were identified as one of the main barriers to participation and in particular for young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Some young people were so anxious that they would not leave their house or attend college. In general, identity and self-confidence were issues for young people when helping them to participate in education, employment or training.
48. The Board heard that provision of level 1 and level 2 courses is concentrated in the colleges in Eastbourne, Bexhill, Hastings and Plumpton (Level 1 is a basic or Foundation Level course; Level 2 is equivalent to GCSEs or First Diploma Level). There is a lack of provision in the north of the county and in the Newhaven, Seaford, Peacehaven areas of the county. Consequently, young people living in these areas have to travel to access courses and apprenticeships appropriate to their needs. Evidence given to the Board suggests that some young people struggle to afford the travel costs associated with accessing suitable post 16 provision.
49. ESCC is required to provide additional support to groups of young people who are vulnerable to becoming NEET. However, narrowly focusing support on a 'qualifying' group may risk missing out on opportunities to identify and support almost equally vulnerable people. The IPOG told the Board that there is a gap in provision for this group of young people who do not fall into the most vulnerable category. The Youth Employability Service (YES) also reported that their case load increasingly includes young people from this next most vulnerable group, who often self-refer after dropping out of their college course. The expansion of earlier support in schools for this group could tackle this issue, but will require funding from schools or another source.

Recommendations

- 5) Schools, ESCC and its partners examine ways to support the 'next most at risk' young people who may not meet the official vulnerability criteria e.g. by expanding services in schools, subject to funding.**
- 6) ESCC and its partners explore how mental health awareness and support services to vulnerable young people in schools and colleges could be enhanced.**
- 7) Post 16 providers and ESCC take into account the difficulty some young people, from the northern and western parts of the county, experience in paying for travel to access suitable post 16 provision when targeting travel support.**

5. Meeting Employers' Needs

Investigate whether young people's skills meet employers' needs? Are young people's aspirations matched with education, training and employment opportunities?

50. What young people learn at school is intended, in part, to provide them with the skills they require to have successful lives at work. The skills and abilities that young people need to acquire will vary depending on what the local jobs market looks like and what employers want. In the modern work environment of insecure employment and rapid technological advances, young people increasingly need general 'employability' skills rather than job-specific knowledge.
51. The Board met with Martin Searle of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), and with Christina Ewbank from the Alliance of Chambers in East Sussex (ACES), to hear what local employers think about careers guidance and the work-readiness of young people in East Sussex. This emphasis on the views of small businesses was deliberate: more than 80% of private sector jobs in East Sussex are with small businesses.
52. The FSB stressed the importance of young people being employable, noting that employers frequently report that this is not currently the case. The FSB's Business Manifesto for 2015-20 emphasises this point, calling for the Government to make it an explicit responsibility for schools. The Manifesto also seeks to establish vocational training as equal to academic pathways, the promotion of establishing and/or working in small businesses as a career option for young people, and the further development of apprenticeships.
53. The Board also heard evidence from employability schemes across the county, as well as learning about ESCC plans to develop an 'Employability Passport', a scheme which will enable young people to gather evidence of their skills and experience to present to potential employers.
54. The FSB told the Board that career paths have radically changed in recent years, with many fewer 'jobs for life', and many more people required to pursue a number of careers during the course of their working lives. This makes careers advice much more complicated than it once was: rather than slotting young people into the most appropriate careers paths, advice is now more about helping people develop a wide range of both job specific and generic 'employability' skills.
55. For the FSB employability training should be embedded in a Business & Enterprise GCSE which would be open to all students. Failing this, career building skills should be a core part of PHSE, with a focus on helping young people develop the skills to manage their careers in a fractured and globalised employment market. An employability passport scheme would help drive the idea of employability as a core skill, and may be the most practical short term option to encourage schools and young people to value and develop employability skills.

Employability Passport

56. The Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES) and the Economic Development departments of ESCC, in conjunction with Alliance of Chambers in East Sussex (ACES) and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), have developed the Employability Passport scheme. This is intended to help school leavers collect and document evidence of the practical skills that they have learnt during their schooling and work experience. This evidence is verified and developed into a portfolio that can be shown to prospective employers.
57. The Board was pleased to learn that the scheme is a co-production with small business representatives, which is bound to increase its credibility with employers. A pilot project has been established with thirteen East Sussex schools. The Employability Passports will be moderated to ensure consistency and the pilot evaluated before seeking funding to expand the scheme.
58. ACES surveyed employers to find out what they need from young people entering the job market. They found that small businesses are generally not significantly concerned that young people have specific academic skills beyond good numeracy, literacy and technological aptitude – most employers are willing to provide job-specific training. However, it is vital that young people show practical intelligence and initiative, have a positive attitude, are resilient and are eager to learn. Schools need to reinforce this message to pupils and so these skills can be developed and evidenced through work to complete the core modules of the Employability Passport.

Employability Projects

59. There are a number of projects teaching work skills across the county. For example, the Hastings Furniture Service provides unemployed young people with work experience, helps with CVs and advises on how to cope with interviews, including offering advice on how to prepare for questions and dress appropriately. Other projects include: People Matter, Hastings Works, the Eastbourne and Hastings Jobs Hub and Band of Brothers.

Work Experience

60. ACES work with a number of young people who have struggled to get a job. It found that around a third of the young people it has provided work experience for, have got a job or have secured an apprenticeship directly through their work experience. ACES presents the benefits of work experience to employers, including inviting young people who have benefited from work experience to talk at Chamber meetings. ACES has found that many employers are willing to offer work experience opportunities, although some employers report struggling to make contact with schools.
61. The Board heard that there are barriers to employers providing work experience. Some employers are concerned about the health & safety, insurance and risk implications of taking on young people. Employers may also struggle in terms of having the capacity to spare staff to induct and supervise people on work experience.

62. The FSB reported that when they had run interview skills workshops, there had been limited take up by schools. It appears that businesses are willing to work with schools, but schools find difficulty in taking up these offers. Wealden District Council and a consortium of Eastbourne based schools currently organise Careers Fairs as a way of promoting links between schools and business. There is room to improve the liaison between employers and schools in order to make the most of firms that are keen to engage in work experience and careers advice.
63. The Board has learned that ESCC has obtained fixed term funding from the Careers and Enterprise Company for a Skills East Sussex Enterprise Advisor project. Under the scheme, a project co-ordinator will work to provide a volunteer Enterprise Advisor from the business community for each school. The co-ordinator will carry out brokerage between schools and businesses with the aim of having one local business per school to promote business links.

Apprenticeships

64. Feedback from employers is that the apprenticeship scheme generally works well. However, small employers report sometimes struggling to find the right people to take on. It is very important for small employers that they correctly identify young people who are keen and able to progress in their chosen placement. While larger businesses may be able to cope with the odd apprentice who is not a good fit for their role, this is much more disruptive for smaller concerns. However, small businesses currently tend to rely on college recommendations for apprentices, and it has been suggested that college assessment and employer experience does not always tally. There is scope for small businesses to be offered additional help or support with the process of identifying apprentices who match their needs.
65. The smaller the business, the more onerous will be the burden of any bureaucracy concerning apprenticeships. The FSB considers that the current apprenticeship system is overly bureaucratic and that this may be deterring some businesses from engaging. It is important that administration burdens are minimal and that support is available.
66. ESCC has led the “You’re Hired” campaign with a range of partners to challenge local employers to take on an apprentice. The idea for the “You’re Hired” campaign was developed through the work of Apprenticeships East Sussex. The campaign has been very successful and has led to the offer of 699 apprenticeship places exceeding their target of 500. To date young people have filled 40% of apprenticeship places.

Findings

67. Understandably, employers seek out and select the most academically gifted applicants for apprenticeships. The Board heard evidence from a number of sources that employer expectations of apprentices are not always met. As a consequence, if nothing is done, less academically able applicants will increasingly struggle to find apprenticeships. Some young people who wanted an apprenticeship needed more help and support with learning basic skills before they could start an apprenticeship. One solution would be to focus on promoting and providing more traineeship schemes.

68. For employers, enthusiasm, initiative and flexibility are vital. Employers want schools to teach young people these skills in the context of employment, and ensure that students understand the value employers place on these types of skill.
69. Work experience is important. Young people who understand what doing a job entails are more likely to secure a job or an apprenticeship. Work experience can have a very specific as well as a general value to employers as it can put them into direct contact with potential employees, and therefore reduce the risk of employing young people who are unknown to them.
70. The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) stressed the importance of schools offering high quality vocational education and working to ensure that vocational pathways have equal status to academic ones.
71. Employers are often willing to work with schools, but may be discouraged by schools' failure to engage. This will be addressed by the development of the Enterprise Advisor project, where each school has a volunteer business advisor who can act as a link to local businesses. The Board believes that all secondary schools should be actively encouraged to participate in the project and ESCC should seek to secure longer term funding for this initiative.
72. The Board believe that the establishment of Careers Fairs for schools across the county could provide a sustainable and cost effective way of delivering a range of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) activities that links local businesses and schools. The Sussex Chamber of Commerce has obtained funding to provide four careers fairs across Sussex in the coming year. This project could be used to develop a model to provide Careers Fairs across the county.

Recommendations

- 8) Commend the idea of an employability passport and encourage its swift development. Work should be undertaken where possible to make the Employability Passport regionally and nationally accepted and recognised.**
- 9) Promote a single point of contact for employers eager to offer work experience opportunities, possibly through the new Enterprise Advisor Co-ordinator post or expansion of the ESCC work experience service.**
- 10) The Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES) examines the provision of traineeships to identify whether current provision needs to be expanded, and together with partners, addresses the high expectations of employers regarding apprenticeships.**
- 11) Actively encourage the extension of the provision of Careers Fairs (including apprenticeships), following an evaluation of the Sussex Chambers events, to create a network of Careers Fairs to serve all schools across the County.**
- 12) Seek longer term funding for the Skills East Sussex Enterprise Advisor project, upon successful completion of the pilot scheme.**

6. Concluding comments

73. It is apparent that East Sussex offers young people high quality education and training opportunities. This is reflected in our high participation rates and the low numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This good performance is supported by an effective data recording and analysis system.
74. While everyone involved in these services should feel proud of their work, there are still areas where things could be made even better.
75. This is particularly the case in terms of school careers advice and guidance, where there has inevitably been some fragmentation following the ending of the universal schools service. Schools need to work together here to identify and spread the good practice that some local schools are developing.
76. There is excellent work going on with some of our most vulnerable young people, but here too more could be done particularly in terms of coordinating the many separate strands of work, but also in ensuring that we do not use narrow definitions of vulnerability to exclude people who would benefit from additional support.
77. There is more to be done too in developing good relations between employers and schools, understanding what they need, and ensuring that young people who leave education and training do so with really good employability skills that will help them get jobs and help them begin to develop their careers.

Appendix

Scope and terms of reference

The Scrutiny Committee Review Board has identified a number of lines of inquiry: What can ESCC do to improve participation in education, employment or training?

- Investigate the quality and consistency of careers education information advice and guidance (CEIAG) provided by schools, further education colleges and school sixth forms. In particular, examine the impact of CEIAG and young people's views about its quality from year 8 to year 13.
- Examine tracking and destination data collection to see how this may improve participation. Looking at measures to reduce the number of young people whose status is "Not known"; ensuring quality data and; examining data sharing issues e.g. obtaining access to HMRC employment data to find out when young people are in employment.
- Review the help and support for vulnerable groups and examine the impact of services to re-engage and support them.
- Investigate whether young people's skills meet employers' needs? Are young people's aspirations matched with education, training and employment opportunities?

Review Board Members:

Nicola Boulter, Parent Governor Representative

Councillor Kim Forward

Councillor Roy Galley

Councillor Francis Whetstone

Support to the Board was provided by the following officers:

Fiona Wright, Assistant Director (Education and ISEND)

Elizabeth Funge, Head of Education Improvement

Caroline McKiddie, Partnership Manager: Education, Employment & Training

Jessica Stubbings, Senior Manager: Places and Participations

Caroline Bragg, Partnership Manager: Employability

Witnesses

Martin Searle, (FSB)

Christina Ewbank, (ACES)

Priory School, Lewes

The Causeway School, Eastbourne

Youth Employability Service (YES)

East Sussex Youth Conference

Improving Participation Operational Group (IPOG)

Review Board meeting dates:

23 October 2014 3 December 2014 19 January 2015 24 February 2015
 26 March 2015 7 August 2015 13 October 2015

Visits and attendance at other meetings:

26 February 2015 12 March 2015 23 April 2015 2 October 2015
 14 October 2015

List of evidence papers

Item	Date
Participation of young people in education, employment or training: Statutory guidance for local authorities. DfE.	September 2014.
Transforming 16-19 education and training: the early implementation of 16 to 19 study programmes. Ofsted.	September 2014.
Raising the Participation Age. East Sussex Creating Opportunities Strategy: 16-19 learning 2012 - 2014. ESCC.	2012.
ESCC Corporate Employability and Skills Strategy 2014-2016.	June 2014.
Careers guidance and inspiration in schools: Statutory guidance for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff. Department for Education.	April 2014.
Careers guidance and inspiration in schools: Departmental advice for governing bodies, school leaders and school staff. Department for Education.	April 2014.
Careers guidance and inspiration: Guidance for general further education colleges and sixth form colleges. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills / Department for Education.	August 2014.
Notes from the East Sussex Youth Conference.	12 March 2015
The Apprenticeship Journey. Federation of Small Businesses (FSB).	November 2012
FSB Business Manifesto for the 2015-20 Government.	September 2014
East Sussex Employability Passport: Pilot 2015-16	July 2015
Going in the right direction? Careers guidance in schools from September 2012. Ofsted.	September 2013
Securing a better future for all at 16 and beyond – annual lecture for further education and skills 2014. Ofsted.	September 2014
Tracking young people: A 'how to' guide for councils. Local Government Association.	October 2013
Achievement and retention in post 16 education. Local Government Association.	February 2015

Investors in Careers (IiC) Accreditation – November 2015

School	Investors in Careers (level and date gained)	CEIAG policy	Access to careers advisor qualified up to L4 or L6 for 1:1 career guidance	Access to external impartial IAG provider for 1:1 career guidance	Careers programme mapped against national framework for Careers and Work-Related Education (ACEG April 2012)	Careers programme includes enterprise, employer visits and links to post-16 provision	LMI is embedded in the curriculum including access to websites, careers fairs and employer visits	Records and monitors students' core career management skills	Work experience offered (whole cohort or targeted group)	Working with YES to identify potential NEETs and provide support in yr 11	Works with FE to support transitions post-16	Ex-students take part in career activities to talk about destinations	Careers promoted to parents/carers	Careers provision is evaluated
Beacon	Full Award Jun 2015								Block and EXT		Most go to sixth form			
Bexhill High	Full Award Dec 2014			Students on Pupil Premium					EXT					
Chailey School	Full Award Mar 2015								Block and EXT					
Claverham Community College	Full Award Jul 2012; Reassessed Jun 2015								Block and EXT					
Eastbourne Academy	Full Award Jun 2015													
St. Leonards Academy	Full Award Dec 2012; Due for reassessment													
Hailsham Community College	Full Award Dec 2014								Block and EXT					
Heathfield Community College	Full Award Apr 2013													
Helenswood School	Full Award Mar 2012; Reassessed Jun 2015								Block and EXT					
The Hastings Academy	Full Award May 2013													
Peacehaven Community School	Full Award Nov 2014								EXT					
Priory School	Full Award Nov 2011; Reassessed Dec 2014								Block and EXT					
Ratton School	Full Award Jul 2014													
Ringmer Community College									Block					
Robertsbridge Community College	Full Award Oct 2012; Reassessed Dec 2015								Block					
Rye Studio School									EXT					
Rye College	Full Award Jul 2014								Block					
Seaford Head Community College	Full Award Jul 2013								Block					
St Richard's Catholic College	Full Award Apr 2013								Block					
The Bishop Bell Church Of England	Full Award Jul 2013								Block and EXT					
The Causeway School									Block					
Cavendish School	Full Award Dec 2013								Block					
Seahaven Academy	Full Award Jul 2013								EXT					
Uckfield Community Technology College	Stage 2; Stalled due to lack of support SLT								Block and EXT					
Uplands Community College														
Ark William Parker Academy	Full Award Dec 2013													
Willingdon Community School	Full Award Nov 2011; Reassessed Dec 2014								Block and EXT					

Contact officer for this review:

Martin Jenks, Senior Democratic Services Advisor

Telephone: 01273 481327

E-mail: martin.jenks@eastsussex.gov.uk

West E
County Hall
St Anne's Crescent,
Lewes BN7 1UE