

**'Ensuring people in east Suffolk have the skills to meet employment opportunities':  
Feedback from the Focus Group 9th April 2014 and wider workshop 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014**

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## **1. Background**

1.1 The ESP (Draft) Business Plan states the Board's position on Skills is:

- We will champion the re-skilling and up-skilling of East Suffolk's workforce and explore ways of reducing some of the practical barriers to accessing training and employment, such as the cost and availability of transport and accommodation.
- We support the aspirations of "Raising the Bar" in Suffolk by focusing on inspiring young people with the opportunities in East Suffolk and helping to improve the links between schools, colleges and employers.
- We support work with young people to help us understand the issues and challenges of not being in education, employment or training (NEET).
- We recognise that young people today will need a range of skills to enable them to adapt to the demands of different sectors of the economy.

1.2 Achievements in East Suffolk:

- Raising the Bar – Showcasing the Local Economy to connect children and employers
- Family focus work in both districts
- Different agencies and organisations involved in apprenticeships
- Employer training incentives through local colleges
- Skills roadshow for 11-18/24 year olds is taking place in October at Trinity Showground. Expecting 4000 through the door.
- Tomorrows People working in Lowestoft
- Workclubs in Felixstowe, Woodbridge, Leiston, Beccles, Lowestoft supporting unemployed to move into employment.
- Myriad of training providers operating in East Suffolk – Waveney Learning Community networks many together in the north.

## **2. Developing action**

2.1 A multi-agency focus group in April 2014 brought together representatives from Suffolk County Council and the district councils within East Suffolk to explore objectives and plans around Skills for employment

The focus group identified a need for wider engagement with training providers and this was achieved by working with the Waveney Learning Consortium (WLC). Although the WLC understands the issues important to training providers in Waveney, no equivalent network operates in Suffolk Coastal. Therefore the WLC were commissioned to run a workshop with training providers operating in Suffolk Coastal to develop a picture of provision across the whole of East Suffolk. The workshop held on the 21<sup>st</sup> May with over 30 providers attending.

## **3. Issues raised by Focus and Working Group**

### **3.1 Need to strengthening networks and add value**

- LEP Skills manifesto identifies broad outlines but there is a need for local translation and delivery

- Promotion of joint working by providers – giving them the tools and skills to share information, develop consortia, reduce duplication and work together on delivery is key
- Longer term funding and investment in areas of need – e.g. where there is a high number of older adult unemployed
- Involving under 16's needs the schools to be fully engaged – support for training providers, agencies and employers to engage with schools – local brokerage required
- Tapping into the benefit of City Deal in Ipswich
- Barriers to delivery in rural areas
- Need for a co-ordinated training network across Waveney and Coastal
- Potential for much closer working and project development with others, such as the East Suffolk Business Association Network.

### **3.2 Raising Aspirations**

- Must start at primary school
- The area has real opportunities in industries such as construction, leisure, care and retail – job aspiration at all levels should be raised
- Need for employers to have more input into the teaching syllabus to show how theory becomes practice in industry
- Over 50's – a big gap in provision, particularly around ICT and softer skills

### **3.3 Knowledge conduit**

- Raising the Bar – wider roll out across the districts
- Learning from Lowestoft Rising - embed wider across the districts
- Accessible information on relevant skills training and grants for businesses
- More research with employers to gauge their internal skills provision and understand their future labour market needs
- More sharing of this information between partners – much is locked away

## **4. Key Messages and recommendations**

- 4.1 The Board is asked to discuss the contents of this report and the associated presentation and provide a mandate to the direction it wishes to take.

The Board is reminded that the ESP (draft) priorities for 2014 are to:

- Ensure access to job search and job application support is available for everyone who needs it.
- Explore ways to reduce the practical barriers to accessing training and employment, such as the cost and availability of transport and accommodation.
- Support and develop initiatives to help young people raise their aspirations and find work, education or training opportunities.
- Support and develop initiatives to improve the links between schools, colleges and employers.

- 4.2 That a multi-agency working party is convened to develop actions and prepare costed outcome proposals to draw down ESP funds if required.