



Employment & Skills Board

SERVING THE ALLIANCE AREA OF NORTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE &
NORTH DERBYSHIRE

Thursday 20 September 2007 – Markham Vale

Attendees

Andrew Street (AS), Alliance SSP (acting Chair)
Jean Pardoe (JP), Connexions Notts
Alan Mitcheson (AMi), GOEM
Rosie Duncan (RD), EMQC
Christine Wood (CW), TUC
Sue Hepworth (SH), Nottinghamshire Health Community
Janet Charlton (JC), Nottinghamshire Training Network
Natalie Rodgers (NR), Bolsover District Council (representing Sonia Coleman)
Ian Murray (IM), CHEA (representing Freda Tallantyre)
Kay Adkins (KA), KAM Ltd
Gary Longden (GL), Connexions (agenda items 1 to 4 only)
Nigel Jackson (NJ), LSC Nottinghamshire
Andrew March (AMa), LSC Derbyshire
Heather Downey (HD), Consultant – Alliance Employment and Skills Board
Louise Benson (LB), LSC Nottinghamshire (minutes)

Apologies

Frank Lord
Tom Stockwell
Don Hayes
Freda Tallantyre
Celia Morris/Geoff George
Wes Lumley/Sonia Coleman
Richard Gill
Sarah Bentley
Stef Stubbs

Topic	Information	Actions	Lead Partners	Timescale
1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies	Andrew Street AS welcomed all present to the meeting, especially the new members Kay Adkins and Rosie Duncan representing the employer community and Alan Mitcheson, who has replaced Ann Jones as the GO-EM representative.			

<p>2. Minutes and Matters Arising from the previous meeting</p>	<p>Declarations of interest There were no interests declared in relation to the printed agenda.</p> <p>Minutes and matters arising from the previous meeting The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record</p> <p>1. ESP: HD advised that copies of the ESP Action Plan had been tabled. Additional copies are available from HD on request.</p> <p>2. Higher Level Skills: AS advised that a further invitation to bid for this capital funding will be issued in October</p> <p>3. Worklessness: HD advised that, further to the presentation at the last meeting, the emda/esp commissioned project on worklessness and social exclusion had been completed, with the full report presented to the esp task and finish group and summary recommendations forwarded to the esp Executive. One of the key recommendations is that ESF Priority 1 funding should be used to support multi-agency employment teams. AS advised that this has stimulated debate amongst the key partners at sub regional and regional level, resulting in a letter from emda to Jobcentre Plus requesting that the ESF Invitation to Tender specifies the inclusion of sub-regional and local partnership models such as Making the Connection.</p> <p>4. ESF: HD advised that any organisations wishing to apply for LSC ESF funding must complete and submit the electronic Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) by 28 September.</p> <p>5. Work Plan and Mapping: HD advised that some verbal feedback had been received on the proposals and the papers would be brought back to the next meeting.</p>	<p>HD to include on agenda for next meeting.</p>		
<p>3. 14-19 Update</p>	<p>Gary Longden, Connexions Notts GL advised that significant work is currently underway nationally to support the phased implementation of a revised 14-19 curriculum offer by 2013. This will not replace the existing National Curriculum based on GCSEs and A levels but will complement it to provide a wider range of progression pathways 14-19. There are five main strands within the revised curriculum offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diplomas: by September 2013 all students must be able to access 14 diplomas, not necessarily delivered by their own school but within 			

	<p>their own locality. The diplomas are being introduced in three phases, called Gateways, annually from September 2008 to September 2010. All four LA Districts in North Nottinghamshire bid successfully for at least one strand of learning in the first Gateway, and are now preparing bids for Gateway 2, which can also include bids for any areas of learning not secured under Gateway 1. North Derbyshire did not have any successful bids under Gateway 1, but can likewise bid retrospectively under Gateway 2. GL emphasised that diplomas have a high academic content and are not, as widely believed, essentially vocational in nature.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Foundation Learning Tier, which is being phased in from September 2007, is a programme of study for learners at or below level 1. The majority of learners accessing this programme will be in special schools but foundation learning tier provision will also be available within mainstream education. • Functional Skills: linked to key skills, functional skills in English, Maths and ICT will, in the main, be embedded within the curriculum but they will also be available as stand alone qualifications for young people and adults. The programme will be implemented in full by September 2010. • Personal Learning and Thinking Skills will likewise be embedded in the curriculum. Work is currently underway to develop measurement criteria for skills such as creative thinking and team working ahead of the implementation date of September 2008. • Personal Development Curriculum: the introduction of a new integrated Personal Development Curriculum from 2008 will simplify, standardise and update a range of curricula currently in place. The new curriculum will have two key strands, personal well-being and economic well-being, which together will support young people to succeed. <p>GL advised that employers have an important role to play in delivering 14-19 Diplomas, but that awareness is generally low in the business community. In response to this, emda has issued an invitation to tender for the provision of a business support service 'Catapulting Kids' to promote the advantages of employer participation in Diplomas and reduce the bureaucracy that may be a barrier to participation. Thanking GL for his informative presentation, AS invited comments from the Board. The following points were made:</p>			
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	<p>IM reiterated that Diplomas have minimal vocational content and it is important that employers are given a clear and accurate picture of what Diplomas are.</p> <p>AMa emphasised that Apprenticeships will continue to be the main vocational pathway.</p> <p>JP stated that planned curriculum developments will challenge existing vocational provision pre-16 and expressed concern that some proven progression routes could be lost.</p> <p>RD emphasised the importance of ensuring that learning skills are embedded within the curriculum as the ‘how’ of learning is as important as the ‘what’ in terms of future employability and personal development. Endorsing this point, CW stated that communication and self- confidence are also important.</p> <p>KA stated that employers need simple, clear communication without jargon to encourage them to engage. Schools should be given training to enable them to sell the benefits of engagement to employers.</p> <p>JP questioned the rationale for the emda business support tender and whether plans are in place to integrate this activity with existing employer engagement strategies across the partnership. Endorsing KA’s point about simplicity, JP stated that this must apply to the messenger as well as the message and there is real scope for confusing employers unless a co-ordinated partnership approach is adopted.</p> <p>IM (who declared an interest in his capacity as a Board member of the Derbyshire EBP) stated that Education Business Partnerships are the established vehicles for brokering relationships between schools and employers and questioned the rationale for reducing funding for these bodies given the centrality of employer engagement to the Diplomas agenda.</p> <p>JC stated that Nottinghamshire Training Network was organising an event entitled ‘14-19 Made Easy’ in November which Board members are welcome to attend. Details will be circulated in due course.</p> <p>Concluding the discussion, AS stated that the Employment & Skills Board must be kept abreast of developments and work to ensure that the new emda service operates in partnership not isolation. To this end he agreed to contact emda and report back to the next meeting.</p>	<p>AS to contact emda and report back to the next meeting.</p>		
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<p>4. National Policy Developments</p>	<p>Heather Downey HD gave a presentation on key developments for the Employment & Skills Board in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leitch Implementation • Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration • DWP Green Paper ‘In Work, Better Off’. <p>HD highlighted that the Employment & Skills Board had been asked by the LSC to coordinate a Skills Pledge event in the sub region and that further details would follow for Board members on this.</p> <p>In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:</p> <p>NJ stated that a number of key policy themes appear to be emerging, including greater emphasis on funding employment as well as skills outcomes and a recognition of the centrality of work to the whole social cohesion agenda.</p> <p>IM stated that Leitch is still focussed on qualifications as the driver of economic competitiveness.</p> <p>AMa emphasised the importance of designing programmes through real consultation with employers rather than anticipating perceived business needs.</p> <p>RD endorsed this view and stated that simplicity and spoon-feeding are not synonymous and further work needs to be done on SME engagement.</p> <p>All agreed with NJ’s view that not enough support is on offer post-employment to keep vulnerable adults in work.</p> <p>JC stated that the learner support function at Nottinghamshire Training Network, shortly to be extended to the Derbyshire Network, is recognised as a model of good practice in this respect. It was agreed that a meeting should be arranged between NTN and Making the Connection to encourage joint working.</p> <p>KA advised that National Skills Academies are set to play a prominent role in employer engagement and it was agreed that an item on the role of NSAs should be included on a future Skills Board agenda.</p>	<p>SS to arrange a meeting between NTN and MtC</p> <p>HD to include NSA on a future agenda.</p>		
<p>5. Making the Connection - Performance Update</p>	<p>Andrew Street AS advised that the hosting arrangements for Making the Connection will transfer to the Alliance SSP, from Bolsover District Council, with the new MtC Manager to be employed by the SSP. The role specification for</p>			

	<p>the vacancy has been revised to reflect the skills required to deliver key outcomes and a recruitment process is in train. A positive meeting with key partners took place on 3 September to review the MtC model. Performance statistics for both community and employer engagement are included in the paper for Board members' reference.</p> <p>NJ stated that the MtC model adds real value through its wide partnership membership and demonstrates a cohesive and professional approach to employers.</p>			
6. Train to Gain - Performance Update	<p>Nigel Jackson NJ reported on Train to Gain performance at the end of the 2006/07 academic year. Although the ambitious year-end targets have not been met, performance improved significantly in the later stages of the year and early indicators for 2007/08 are promising. AMa emphasised the importance of seeing Train to Gain as a programme focussed on employer skills needs analysis rather than simply a vehicle to deliver Level 2 and Basic Skills qualifications. The programme is generating significant volumes of employer funded provision, which is not reflected in the LSC's statistics and, also positively, the brokerage service in the East Midlands is recording high levels of employer satisfaction. He further advised that there have been some modifications to the programme in response to feedback from employers, although IM stated that to be fully responsive to employers' needs the programme would need to be able to offer accredited bite size units rather than full level 2 qualifications. RD stated that, as an employer, she would welcome some data on employer satisfaction and economic impact and it was agreed that Richard Gill should be requested to provide this for a subsequent meeting.</p>			HD to discuss this agenda item with RG
7. Executive Group Terms of Reference	<p>Heather Downey HD advised that the Executive Group established to support the work of the Employment & Skills Board has now met twice. HD invited comments on the draft terms of reference supplied. All present agreed that these accurately reflected the remit of the group, but KA expressed concern that the proposed membership does not include any employer representation. It was agreed that employer representation should be</p>			HD to seek employer representation and circulate summary report.

	sought, possibly via the Notts/Derbys Chamber, and that Employment & Skills Board members should be provided with a summary report highlighting key issues/decisions.			
8. Any Other Business	<p>AS advised that Derbyshire County Council has established an Employment & Skills Board and that he and HD had attended its first meeting. He had agreed that the Alliance ESB would work closely with this body to ensure that emerging plans were complementary.</p> <p>HD stated that an updated version of the Alliance ESB work plan would be circulated at the next meeting alongside a summary of partners' strategic objectives for the sub region.</p> <p>HD advised that the CFE(Centre for Enterprise) is undertaking research on good practice in Skills Boards. Board members may be contacted about this, although participation is optional. It has been requested that results of the research will be shared with the Board in due course.</p> <p>KA advised that she had recently attended an AimHigher event in Ashfield and reported that employers participating in this work appeared very positive. A CD-Rom of the event is available from HD on request.</p>	HD to contact Board members for sub regional strategic objectives for inclusion.		

Next Meeting: 13th December 2007, 3.30 – 5.30pm. Venue TBC.