



Report of the Chief Education Officer

Education & Skills Policy Development & Delivery Committee - 11 October 2017

Education and Skills Needs Assessment

Background

The purpose of this paper is to outline expectations from Swansea of what an optimal delivery vehicle would be for ensuring we have arrangements in place to meet the skills needs to effectively deliver the City Deal, and to ensure that local people are given every opportunity to be a part of those changes.

The identified skills gap necessitates a strong commissioning strategy, bridging not only current provision but also the need to support pupils to secure long term and sustained skilled employment that the City Deal will offer.

An Employment and Skills Plan for South West and Mid Wales was developed by the Regional Learning & Skills Partnership (RLSP) between January and July 2017 with the aim of informing and supporting the Welsh Government's (WG's) strategic approach to the delivery of employment and skills provision.

Further discussions with other partners in the Joint Committee and the Regional Learning & Skills Partnership and schools are needed.

What are we planning to do and why it is important

- Conduct a needs assessment SWOT analysis (SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats)
- Undertake a further needs assessment in order to rank the identified needs so we can choose what we will address. Use feasibility as a criteria examining the depth of the need and potentially required resources using a force field analysis collecting information on facilitating and impending forces
- Work with the RSLP which shows good data capacity and capability to build upon as well as the established mechanisms for developing enhanced skills needs assessments
- Undertake a needs analysis on a regular basis, working with the business communities/employers involved in future growth. Employers, working with expert education professionals, need to set the standards; they must define the skills, knowledge and behaviours required for skilled employment. We will balance the needs analysis for the City Deal alongside existing analysis of needs for skills more widely
- Undertake a predictive modelling for future education and skills needs across the curriculum

- Ensure pupils have the relevant skills. As well as good literacy and numeracy skills, pupils will require an essential set of digital skills and these digital skills will be built into the common core from Foundation Phase to key stage 3. For key stage 4 and 'A' level we will build on previous knowledge and actively promote computer science and coding in particular. Beyond this, digital skills requirements should be tailored, and employer panels will be in the lead to specify digital skills required for entry into particular groups of skilled occupations
- Ensure pupils have appropriate 'soft skills'. As well as occupation-specific requirements, many employers demand similar workplace skills e.g. communicating, working in a team and solving problems. Employers will be asked to articulate a common set of transferrable skills which could apply across all routes
- Highlight opportunities and raise aspirations for the skills needed in the businesses of the future and in particular science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM subjects) to parents, schools and pupils of all ages and genders
- Enhance careers education and guidance. Schools and colleges will need to look beyond the point at which a child or young person leaves them. Pupils should be offered a variety of activities embedded in the curriculum and delivered in collaboration with employers and other partners to inform and inspire young people about all the options available to them. Ensure schools and colleges provide independent and impartial careers guidance
- Technical education post 16 should build upon the core academic subjects and broad and balanced curriculum that all pupils study up to the age of 16. If young people are to succeed in the workplace, those following a technical education must benefit as much from the knowledge and skills that are gained through a core academic curriculum at GCSE as their counterparts who choose 'A' levels
- Technical education needs to be fulfilling, aspirational, clearly explained and attractive as the current system is complex and difficult to navigate for pupils
- Oversee the alignment of new apprenticeships to future skills needs and ensure there are sufficient apprenticeship opportunities
- Oversee close integration between schools, college-based and employment based technical education so that stakeholders can understand how they fit together and how to move from one to the other as seamlessly as possible
- Liaise with regional education provision to ensure aspirations for quality education delivery and any curriculum changes are managed effectively in a collaborative manner
- Manage effectively relationships and funding contracts with Welsh Government
- Identify, develop and apply for additional funding to address skills needs
- Ensuring liaison and coordination with local arrangements through Wellbeing Assessments, Wellbeing Plans and other local partnerships
- Ensure there are options for individuals to upskill and take their learning and qualifications to the next level, at all ages
- Identify options and liaise with providers to further enhance teaching and learning capability in education settings at all levels
- Commission providers to deliver responses to meet needs

- Monitor performance of progress to meeting needs, and to ensure effective outcomes for learners, identifying areas for improvement
- Involve pupils in the development of new initiatives and ensuring they are able to exercise their right to have a say in decisions that affect them.

What we plan to do and governance

The key points here are about effective overall pathways starting in early years provision, and the wider needs analysis.

If the above are agreed as the functions that need to be carried out, then the form can follow. It is suggested that given the need for both an overarching strategy and coordination function between businesses and learning providers as well as a detailed operational function to commission responses and monitor their outcomes, two types of body may be appropriate – a strategic coordination group and a commissioning group.

Given that the overriding concern is ensuring effective educational pathways from the start of pupil's education, and that the concerns outlined here relate to whole populations, the lead organisations with responsibility for overseeing outcomes for populations are local authorities and with the high profile nature of these sets of initiatives, a democratic mandate and Council Member involvement is highly appropriate.

Therefore, there could be two bodies to oversee this work – a commissioning group reporting to a strategic skills board that reports to the City Deal Joint Committee and they could have terms of Reference that include the following.

Strategic Board

- Ensures democratic oversight and accountability
- Is held accountable by the Joint Committee for ensuring delivery of education and skills to meet the needs of the City Deal arrangements
- Holds commissioners accountable for delivery of these arrangements
- Involves businesses, learning providers and elected Members in developing the strategy for education pathways and directing commissioners about appropriate responses
- Welsh Government as well?
- Ensures learning at all ages is considered as part of the processes, including learning for higher level skills
- Provides effective oversight for use of the apprenticeship levy funds
- Ensures effective voice of children is considered as part of decision making
- Is accountable through local authority scrutiny arrangements
- Has the authority to direct learning organisations, schools and local authorities to carry out the functions necessary to deliver the aspirations

Commissioning Group

- Delivers according to an established commissioning cycle, commissioning for outcomes
- Ensures effective involvement of providers in a Forum but not on the commissioning group, to maintain transparency in decision making
- Ensures children and young people are able to exercise their right to be heard in decision making as part of the commissioning cycle

- Considers innovative routes to investment, including social investment as well as grant funding and sponsorship
- Ensures value for money in commissioning arrangements
- Delivers needs analysis and predictive modelling for future skills needs, on a short, medium and long term basis
- Identifies appropriate opportunities to build capacity of learning providers across the age ranges
- Ensures effective liaison with regional educational improvement initiatives
- Coordinates with local groups awareness raising on City Deal and skills initiatives, particularly promoting options to underrepresented groups

Conclusion

The RLSP has been providing a role coordinating post-compulsory and tertiary education for many years and covers the six local authority areas, as well as involving businesses, employers and learning providers. There is little involvement of education professionals, with a single representative from one authority representing all the schools in the six authority areas. This will be inadequate to undertake the role outlined above. The focus has been as a delivery body on behalf of Welsh Government, and has insufficient accountability locally, seeming distant to local arrangements. In some cases, local learning partnerships have been put in place to address this. There is no wider strategic function, for example, in promoting pupils and there is little or no involvement of pupils in their work.

The RLSP does have good business or employer representation and many businesses are involved either on the Board itself or in the industry cluster groups and this can be built on to ensure that the growth industries contained in the City Deal are well represented. The Partnership has also undertaken to raise awareness amongst primary and secondary schools and headteachers alongside Swansea staff.

The RLSP also shows good data capacity and capability, which can also be built upon as well as the established mechanisms for developing skills needs assessments.

Therefore, the current arrangements provide some capacity and capability to build upon, but lack the strategic focus and accountability arrangements that will be needed to deliver the optimal model outlined above.