



Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning

Education Scrutiny Performance Panel – 20 April 2023

Progress Update on the Swansea Skills Partnership

Purpose:	To update the Scrutiny Panel on the work of Partneriaeth Sgiliau Abertawe (PSA)/Swansea Skills Partnership (SSP).
Content:	An update on the key priorities of the Swansea Skills Partnership.
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the information provided and give views.
Lead Councillor:	Cabinet Member for Education Improvement Learning and Skills.
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1. Background

- 1.1 In June 2018, Cabinet approved a recommendation from the Education Skills Policy Development Committee to establish an effective strategic partnership between local education providers and associated organisations. The partnership aims to make Swansea one of the best places to be educated in the UK with a focus on supporting the wellbeing objective, that every child and young person in Swansea gains the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in life. Purpose and membership of the SSP can be found in the Terms of Reference, **Appendix A** (updated November 2022).
- 1.2 Indeed, the establishment of the SSP and the strength of partnership working were acknowledged in Estyn's report on education services in Swansea in June 2022:

*'Officers from the education directorate collaborate effectively with other local authority services and directorates and with external organisations, including the regional skills partnership and the Public Service Board. A key outcome of this joint working has been the development of the **Swansea Skills Partnership**, which aligns local authority priorities with regional aspirations. Through a shared commitment to the skills agenda, the partnership has agreed common goals and begun to drive forward work to equip children and young people with useful skills that match potential employment opportunities.'*

1.3 In December 2020 and December 2021, the Educational Scrutiny Performance Panel received updates on the purpose, priorities, and outcomes of the SSP.

2. Briefing and progress update

2.1 Since its beginnings in 2018, the SSP has become an established strategic group for Swansea with clear terms of reference, clear actions and strategic ways of working. The board has ensured that priority workstreams are reported on and actions taken forward. Despite the ongoing challenges from the impact of COVID, funding changes and considerable changes in staffing across all organisations, there has been clear progression and effective impact from the focussed approach of the partnership.

2.2 The five key workstreams of the SSP currently are:

1. Building digital capacity.
2. Advice, information and guidance for vocational education.
3. Swansea, UNESCO learning city.
4. NEETs prevention partnership.
5. Covid response: supporting partners in recovery.

2.3 These workstreams have matured over the years with actions being completed, outcomes achieved and embedded into practice. Indeed, despite some action plans of the workstreams coming to fruition it was decided by the SSP to continue to prioritise these areas due to the impact of COVID on our young people. It is felt the time is now right to develop new workstreams of the SSP and this has been discussed with partners. Partners have been tasked with suggesting fresh workstreams that can begin in the next academic year (2023/2024).

2.4 Furthermore, in September 2021, the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership's (RLSP) skills and talent initiative business case bid was approved by governments and officially launched in April 2022, as the last approved City Deal project. Since the SSP began there have been stronger links with the RLSP and regional partnership opportunities have supported the submission of bids to the RLSP group. Indeed, one of our Swansea secondary schools is leading on a collaboration project for Health and Wellbeing with Swansea University, University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) and local employers as key partners.

2.5 The remainder of this paper will look at each workstream in turn.

Workstream one: Building Digital Capacity

2.6 SSP is committed to working with local employers who require workers with digital skills. To date, effective relationships have been forged with Amazon Web Services (AWS), who have presented to the SSP. The AWS GetIT programme challenges learners to develop concepts for a new digital application that could support their communities. Learners are engaged by female role models who are thriving in digital careers.

- 2.7 Co-constructed professional development courses are developed and delivered to school colleagues across the region with the assistance of regional partners (Partneriaeth). National government colleagues are consulted and contribute to professional learning offers.
- 2.8 Swansea University and their Technocamps initiatives offer multiple educators the opportunity to engage with digital professional learning. The “Certified Technocamps Teacher” course provides primary school educators with 20 hours of dedicated professional learning. This opportunity is offered to three cohorts of educators each academic year.
- 2.9 The Digital Learning Practitioner Level 3 Diploma provided in conjunction with the Big Learning Company continues to be studied by education practitioners from across Swansea schools. The course allows for project content to be tailored to the strategic digital plans of the participant’s school. Senior leaders at schools are engaged with the course content and assessment.
- 2.10 The annual DVLA code challenge affords learners the opportunity to test their digital skills through the development of a coded solution to a given scenario. Learners submit entries to a panel of industry and education experts with the shortlisted entries invited to attend a live event at the DVLA’s Richard Ley Development Centre.

Workstream two: Advice, Information, and Guidance for Vocational Education.

- 2.11 The three-year plan for this workstream has now come to an end. During that time several key outcomes have been achieved. Indeed, a robust strategy for vocational education for 14 to 19-year-olds has been developed within the Education Directorate to support its **Designing Destinations Strategy**. Appendix B shows the priorities for the Vocational Education strategy.
- 2.12 Following the introduction of Curriculum for Wales and the cross-cutting theme of Careers and Work-Related Experiences (CWRE) a new network has been introduced alongside the suite of other subjects and themes. The CWRE network began meeting in December 2022 with representatives from each secondary school, Gower College Swansea and Careers Wales. The aim of the network is to support schools to plan, prepare and deliver Careers and Work-Related Experiences (CWRE) as a cross-cutting theme for Curriculum for Wales. Vocational pathways and progression opportunities are discussed by members of the group.
- 2.13 We recognise Careers Wales as a key partner for this workstream. Careers Wales provides impartial and unbiased advice and guidance to our young people, signposting them to clear vocational pathways through educational providers, apprenticeships and other vocational programmes. Careers Wales has developed its Educational Business Partnership with schools so that all Swansea secondary schools are linked with, or in the process of being linked with, a valued business partner to support with the level of engagement within schools. Through this workstream bi-monthly meetings have been established with Careers Wales to discuss the opportunities and challenges within education.

- 2.14 As previously reported on and discussed; Swansea’s digital platform, My Choice, is a key outcome of this workstream. Working together, the partnership was able to secure a grant to develop a website that brings together all post-16 options in one place for young people to access. This includes all academic and vocational pathways in sixth forms, colleges and work-based learning providers alongside signposting to apprenticeships and opportunities through Jobs Growth Wales. My Choice continues to be promoted in secondary schools through school leaders and Careers Wales. The RLSP has provided up to date labour market intelligence for several priority sectors for the My Choice website <https://mychoice-support.swansea.education/>

Workstream three: Swansea, UNESCO Learning City

- 2.15 The SSP is the Steering Group for Swansea UNESCO Learning City. The Swansea UNESCO Learning City case study was built upon the enterprise education delivered collaboratively by numerous organisations across the City and County of Swansea.
- 2.16 In recognition of the work of the SSP, Swansea was asked to support the city of Hull to develop as an UNESCO Learning City, with the intention of applying for membership of the Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC).
- 2.17 As part of this workstream, The Right Worshipful The Lord Mayor of Swansea hosted an evening at the Mansion House, in celebration of “Enterprise in Swansea” in March 2023. The Lord Mayor, Councillor Mike Day was one of the founders of the “Building Enterprise Education in Swansea” (BEES) network and has been committed to developing enterprise education ‘From Primary to Professional.’ The programme provided an overview of those achievements during the evening. Further presentations were delivered by Swansea University, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Gower College Swansea, Schools, and “2Be Enterprising” on current activities and achievements. A video presentation included over fifty primary schools, who took over the city centre to sell their wares, and presentations showing the impact of enterprise education at all stages of education, from primary to university.
- 2.18 Since the original UNESCO case study, the Learning City initiative has been expanded to include all the different work streams of the SSP. This is because we recognise that Swansea has fully delivered on enterprise education and different priorities have arisen, partly due to changes in the context for Swansea, as the COVID pandemic has highlighted the need for a focus on digital education and a digital workstream.

Workstream four: NEETs Prevention Partnership

- 2.19 The Swansea Not in Employment Education or Training Prevention Partnership (SNPP) is now fully established and meets bi-monthly with several officers across directorates and other stakeholders. The partnership is currently chaired by the Head of Child and Family Services and guided by Welsh Government’s Youth Engagement and Progression Framework, that was re-launched in September 2022.

<https://www.gov.wales/youth-engagement-and-progression-framework-overview-html>

- 2.20 As identified in its terms of reference the SNPP ensures a coherent, coordinated, and clear offer to the education, employment, and training of young people in Swansea, that is understood by all stakeholders. It is committed to providing excellent quality advice, information, and guidance to young people at risk of becoming NEET. The partnership focuses on the strategic themes of performance, provision, access and well-being to mitigate against the risk of NEET.
- 2.21 As a partnership, all stakeholders are committed to effective data management and information sharing protocols, co-ordinated around the needs of the learner. A key element of the group has been to develop a robust data sharing document to support these learners through the Wales accord on the sharing of personal information (WASPI).
- 2.22 Gower College Swansea is supporting the NEET agenda in Swansea by employing transition and engagement mentors (September 2022) that work across all schools to support the successful transition of young people. This aims to increase retention and progression to further education and training, and ultimately sustainable employment.
- 2.23 The SNPP is currently discussing the changes in provision to those at risk of becoming NEET due to new funding streams through the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). It has been encouraging that the council's Economic Recovery Fund has actively supported the transition of funding arrangements so that those most at risk of becoming NEET are seamlessly supported during this time.

Workstream five: Covid response: Supporting partners in recovery.

- 2.24 As education partners facing the impact of lockdowns and the consequences of COVID, a workstream for COVID Recovery was established to bring together the support and expertise of several institutions. The short-term goals of sharing good practice and effectively communicating challenges and opportunities have been achieved.
- 2.25 The SSP compiled and distributed a best practice guide for blended learning approaches from Swansea primary and secondary schools as well as further and higher educational institutions. This was disseminated to partners of the SSP. A combined calendar of transition activities, taster sessions and open days/evening events was also distributed. This useful document helped to identify the support that was available during a particularly challenging time. Under this work stream the SSP was also able to write a letter to Welsh Government expressing the shared concerns surrounding the negative impact of the pandemic on learners in Swansea schools during the 2021/2022 academic year. The specific impact of examination arrangements was highlighted. Reassuringly, the response from Owain Lloyd, Director of Education and Welsh Language, outlined the ongoing work with Qualifications Wales and the examination arrangements for that year.

Summary

2.26 Despite the challenges of recent years and the ongoing impact of COVID on our young people, the five workstreams of the SSP have made good progress and achieved successful outcomes. Current NEET percentage for Swansea is 1.9% and below the Welsh average of 2.1%.

2.27 The partnership is now looking to develop new workstreams that support young people in Swansea to gain the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in life through collaboration and partnership working.

3. Legal implications

3.1 There are no legal implications.

4. Finance Implications

4.1 There are no finance implications.

5. Equality and Engagement Implications

5.1 An IIA is not required as this report is for information only.

Appendices:

Appendix A - Swansea Skills Partnership Terms of Reference

Appendix B - Vocational Education strategy priorities