



Scrutiny Report Employability Skills

People Scrutiny Panel

February 2013



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FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Cllr Elaine Marper
Chairman, People Scrutiny Panel

The People Scrutiny Panel decided to conduct a short review to look at young people's transition from education to employment

As parents, we are well aware that our children's choice of career is possibly one of the most important decisions they will make in life. It is vital that our young people are equipped with clear and accessible information to enable them to consider relevant education, training and employment options. The choice of career path is not something easily made.

Our youngsters need to be provided with realistic training and employment information throughout their secondary education years, so in this way their ultimate decision can be based on an informed knowledge of what job opportunities are, or are likely to be available to them, prior to their choice of subjects during their secondary education and before they embark on specific training courses.

The panel therefore decided to look at what was being done across North Lincolnshire in providing training and career choices, and also look at the role of the prospective employers in this process in addition to ways things could be improved.

I would like to thank all the dedicated members of our People Scrutiny Panel for their research and input into this review and on their behalf thank the officers and other witnesses who attended our meetings to answer our many questions on this important and far reaching scrutiny review.

BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

This review was prompted by members' interest in two inter-related issues, which will be of great importance to the local area in future years. Firstly, the Northern Lincolnshire area is currently seeking a major, nationally important, number of developments across the South Bank of the Humber estuary. This has the potential to lead to a significant number of new jobs, inward investment and a boost to the local economy.

Secondly, given the current economic climate, there is clear potential to tie this proposed inward investment to up-skilling our local workforce, ensuring meaningful opportunities are available to the local population, and retaining graduate-level individuals within North Lincolnshire.

The panel strongly supports the strategy of encouraging investment in the area as this links well with long-standing efforts to address historically poor skill levels and aspiration. As a whole range of opportunities open up, it will be important to co-ordinate the economic, educational and environmental considerations to ensure they have the greatest positive impact.

The members therefore felt that a short review on ongoing and proposed work would be helpful to ensure that our young people and others can make the most of this opportunity, and successfully make the transition from education and training into employment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The panel welcomes the introduction of an annual careers fair. The panel therefore recommends that all schools, colleges and other young people should be encouraged to attend this event, and with the assistance of wide press and media coverage we further recommend that the council actively encourages a wider range of prospective employers, educational institutions and trainers, including those not immediately able to offer opportunities and employment. The panel also recommends that the Cabinet Member for People and the People Scrutiny Panel be advised on those schools who will/will not be attending future events in order that "take-up" can be measured.

Recommendation 2: The panel recommends that officers co-ordinating the annual careers fair liaise with North Lincolnshire Association of Governing Bodies to enable existing governors to speak informally to local employees, and to raise the possibility of encouraging companies to identify potential school governors.

Recommendation 3: The panel recommends that the council use all opportunities to promote governorship at business functions and other relevant events across North Lincolnshire, with the aim of drawing up a list of potential school governors with links to local employers. This list should then be shared with schools.

Recommendation 4: The panel recommends that the Director of People, in co-operation with the Cabinet Member for People, continue to inform the panel of progress on educational/employment outcomes on a regular basis.

Recommendation 5: The panel recommends that the council, in consultation with its partners, publish their progress in identifying and intervening with those young people at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

Recommendation 6: The scrutiny panel recommends that the Assistant Director, School Improvement, provides further regular updates as to what effective practices for raising achievement and challenging underperformance are being used across North Lincolnshire schools.

Recommendation 7: The panel recommends that the council, through its established links, encourages all schools and colleges throughout North Lincolnshire to sign up to the Humber Economic Business Partnership's Employability Charter.

Recommendation 8: The panel recommends that the council promotes work experience opportunities to schools and continues to extend work experience opportunities across the authority and also encourage placements with partners in the wider Children's Trust Board.

Recommendation 9: The panel recommends that the council promote its Careers, Information, Advice and Guidance Team (IAG) further.

Recommendation 10: The panel recommends that the Schools Forum be asked to promote the availability of development funds in order to encourage employability, careers advice and establishing links with employers.

The panel would wish to see each of these recommendations either acted upon or planned for by September 2013.

FINDINGS

Context

Each year thousands of young people across North Lincolnshire leave secondary education, college or university and aim to move into employment. This can often be a difficult transition, even when people have the skills that employers ask for. When people do not have these skills, they tend to remain either out of work or in low paid jobs. The Employer Skills Survey 2011 calculates that, in England, 37% of young people leaving school at 16 are either 'poorly prepared' or 'very poorly prepared' for work. However, amongst people leaving university or higher education, this figure drops to 14%.

To ensure that our young people have the best chance of moving into the world of work, it is important to:

- **ensure that they have a full understanding of the options that are available to them,**
- **build aspiration,**
- **encourage people to stay in education, and**
- **provide a clear long-term pathway from this aspiration to gaining the necessary skills and experience required to secure a rewarding and productive job.**

Ensuring these key aims requires a complex relationship between various teams across the council, local schools, colleges and other education and training providers, a host of employers, parents and guardians and the young people themselves. As the situation changes over time, inevitably, these relationships and pathways will need to evolve. Supporting young people in the most effective manner will ensure that they are confident and skilled, that they 'know where

they're going' with their plans, and that they will play their part in building a rewarding life.

One opportunity for ensuring that young people gain the necessary skills for employment will be the raising of the participation age in education and training to age 18. This policy will help those typically falling out of education to move instead into either jobs with training, vocational courses, or courses leading to qualifications. This will increase their future earnings and opportunities. However, this requires clear and suitable post-16 pathways to training, education or employment and methods of ensuring these young people are encouraged to participate. Particular consideration needs to be given to engaging young people from vulnerable groups that historically have been more at risk of becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

FINDINGS

The Situation in North Lincolnshire

There are a number of local strengths and weaknesses related to the transition of young people from education and/or training into employment. Firstly, the local history and geography of the sub-region supports a range of opportunities. The Humber Estuary is ideally placed to host established and developing industries and there are huge opportunities for bio-energy and offshore wind technology, most notably via the proposed South Humber Gateway (SHG). The SHG provides the largest and most significant development opportunity for inward investment and employment in the region. Wind turbine power, biofuel and biomass technology as well as other green energy industries will all be key economic drivers in future years.

In addition, the Deep Water Estuary has helped to provide a large number of established industries with an international profile, and an associated skill base. This is coupled with a rising population and relatively low-cost infrastructure and housing, which potentially makes the area extremely attractive.

Despite this, there are challenges. The local population has lower skill levels than our national and regional peers. Youth unemployment is higher than average in North Lincolnshire, particularly in areas of deprivation (see Figure 1, Appendix 2). However, we have comparatively low rates of those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

North Lincolnshire has a long tradition of manufacturing, which is reflected in this being the largest sector of employment locally, with almost twice as many people working in this area as compared to the regional average (see Table 1, Appendix 2). However, the Local Economic Assessment states that the ‘manufacturing sector continues to be “vulnerable to decline” in the face of growing international competition’.

For a number of years in North Lincolnshire, there has been a trend of young people leaving to go to university and not returning to the area after graduation. In addition, our young people have lower than average levels of aspiration to go onto university education. When asked whether young people from North Lincolnshire aspire to move into higher education, the results showed a marked disparity between genders (see Table 2, Appendix 2).

Educational attainment in North Lincolnshire continues to improve year-on-year, with 55.7% of students achieving five or more grades at A* to C including English and maths in 2011-12; a 4 percentage point increase on last year, but still lower than the provisional regional and national averages of 58.4%. North Lincolnshire was the tenth highest performing local authority area in England in 2012 by the 5A* to C GCSE and equivalent measure. Despite this, there are significant inequalities. As elsewhere, girls outperform boys, with a 10 percentage point difference in achievement of five or more grades at A* to C including English and mathematics.

Those from our most deprived areas, including those on free school meals, achieve less well in their educational attainment compared to those who live in the least deprived areas.

The number of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) is relatively low in North Lincolnshire, with a figure of less than 6%, compared to 8.1% nationally. However, the numbers tend to rise as deprivation levels increase, with nearly 10% of 16-18 year olds from Frodingham categorised as NEET.

Despite these challenges, and the ongoing economic conditions, there are numerous opportunities to improve the life chances of our young people leaving employment.

This is set out in the draft Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, which states that:

The 2011 Economic Assessment suggests there will be significant future employment growth over the next 5-10 years in a number of trades and industries, including new energy industries, construction, engineering, finance, hotel and distribution services. The recent reduction of the Humber Bridge toll should also improve labour mobility and ease residents' access to education, training and employment opportunities.

Realising this potential will mean aligning the education, training and skills profile of the future workforce to this new job market.

This is discussed further within the panel's conclusions and recommendations.

Employers' Requirements

The Humber Education Business Partnership (EBP) is a key sub-regional body which attempts to link education and business, via work experience, training and workforce development, and ensuring schools' curriculum management takes into account employability. Through their discussions with industry and a range of employers, they have agreed a document called 'The Employability Charter.' This sets out a number of skills, as defined by business, that young people should have in addition to formal qualifications. These are outlined in Table 3, Appendix 2.:

The University of Kent produced a similar list for graduates, which is listed as Table 4, Appendix 2..

Ongoing work within North Lincolnshire

The council has recently established an Education and Economic Engagement Partnership, with representation from key figures across the council, North Lindsey and John Leggott colleges, secondary Headteachers, the Local Economic Partnership, the EBP and the Consortium for Learning, a charity campaigning for improved work based learning. This Partnership sits under the Children's Trust Board governance to ensure it has the necessary influence to achieve change.

FINDINGS

North Lincolnshire Council has supported the increasing autonomy of schools in North Lincolnshire, and still plays a key role in communicating opportunities and best practice to local schools and colleges. From September 2012, the responsibility for ensuring independent careers advice and guidance and work experience was devolved to schools. Crucially, local schools and colleges remain engaged with the local authority Careers, Information Advice and Guidance Team.

The council still maintains careers, information and guidance for young people as an online resource. This can link people to further information on various careers, education, apprenticeships, training and volunteering, etc.

The increased autonomy for schools will enable the local authority to target its attention and resources to support and augment schools' own improvement efforts. A number of specific roles and activities are suggested, including:

- **acting as a critical friend to schools' quality assurance, self evaluation and improvement processes,**
- **developing the capacity of the local education system to provide school-to-school support, acting as a catalyst for further improvement**
- **providing information, advice, guidance and a brokerage role to develop schools' self-help pathways – including a single point of reference for finding out what is available,**

- **using the local authority's influence and moral authority to ensure that the diversifying education system remains sufficiently coherent and functional to deliver wellbeing to all,**
- **working with schools to understand and secure effective market-making and market management roles,**

North Lincolnshire Council maintains a statutory and moral responsibility to ensure that children in its area are adequately educated, supported and looked after. Locally the relationship between the authority and education establishments has been based on influence and mutual accountability as opposed to the management of schools.

From early January 2013, North Lincolnshire Council launched a public consultation seeking views on a proposed University Technical College for Engineering. This would be a state-funded facility in central Scunthorpe for young people aged 14-19, which would teach conventional subjects plus vocational learning with industry partners. Again, the proposal is based around strengthening the local workforce in a range of engineering specialisms, in order to match the forthcoming developments described throughout this report.

Finally, on 8 October 2012, North Lincolnshire Council hosted a Careers Fair for local people at Forest Pines Hotel. This Fair was visited by more than 1,600 young people from across the North Lincolnshire area, who had the opportunity to speak informally with around 70 exhibitors, including employers, colleges and universities.

CONCLUSION

The panel heard clear evidence that employer engagement activities such as work experience can lead to young people being up to five times more likely to end up within education, training or employment. However, we need to find an effective way to bring together schools, employers, educational and training organisations, and the council. This requires identifying all key players, engaging with them in order to highlight how each side can gain from partnership working, and putting in place plans to help our young people.

We have heard many instances where this is being done. The Education and Economic Engagement Partnership is the key group locally, and whilst it is still in its early stages, we are confident that it will deliver on its aims. Co-ordination, encouragement, and highlighting the benefits of working together should be this group's priorities.

We are moving towards a model of increased autonomy for various organisations that all play a role in preparing our young people for work, or for education and training. This will require a range of skills to 'hold together' and agree a co-ordinated plan. We look forward to monitoring progress on our recommendations, and, of course, to seeing our young people move on in the world to reach their potential.

APPENDIX 1

Membership of the panel

Cllr Elaine Marper (Chairman)

Cllr John Collinson (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Jonathan Evison

Cllr Susan Godfrey

Cllr David Wells

Mrs Angela Dunkerley

Mr William Egan

Mrs Wendy Witter

Mr Neal Craven was also involved in this review.

APPENDIX 2

Relevant diagrams and tables

Figure 1. Jobseekers Allowance claimant rates by age, June 2012

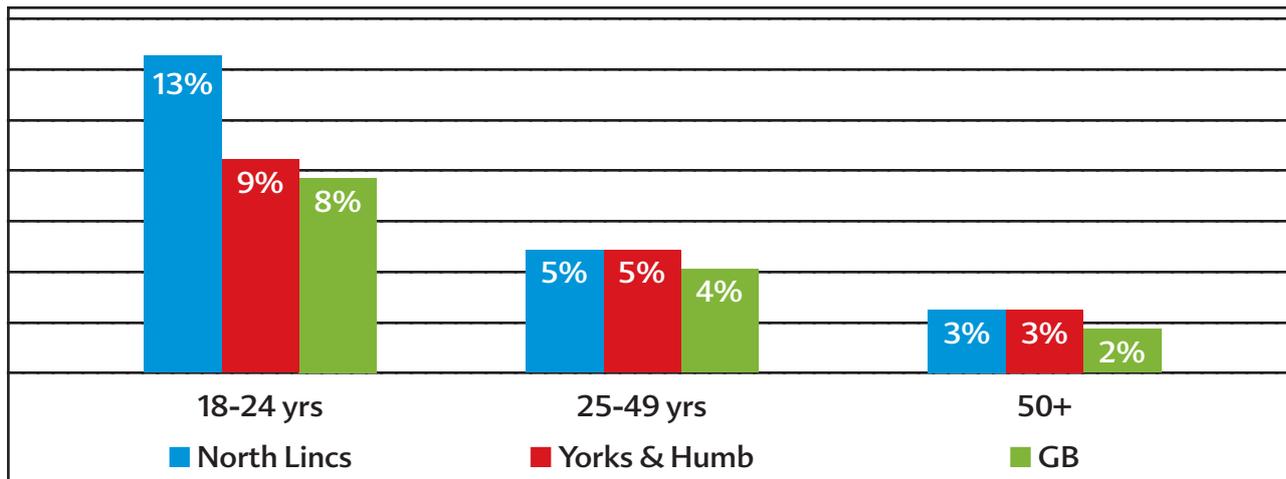


Table 1. Percentage employment by sector (2008 – latest figures)

	North Lincolnshire	Yorkshire & the Humber	England
Manufacturing	22.4%	12.2%	9.4%
Wholesale & Retail Trade	15.7%	17.0%	16.7%
Human, Health and Social Work	11.3%	12.6%	11.7%
Transportation & Storage	8.3%	4.7%	4.8%
Construction	8.1%	5.5%	4.9%
Education	7.5%	10.6%	9.5%

Table 2. % pupils who aspire to higher education (2010)

	Yes	No
Free school meal status	25%	75%
Non-free school meal status	38%	62%
Boys	29%	71%
Girls	44%	56%
BME	38%	62%
White	36%	64%

Table 3. Desired skills and qualities amongst employers. Humberside EBP.

1. Self-Management	Readiness to accept responsibility, flexibility, drive.
2. Team-working	Co-operation, respecting others, contributing.
3. Business and customer awareness	Basic understanding of the key drivers for business success.
4. Problem solving	Analysis and the application of creative thinking.
5. Communication and literacy	Ability to produce clear written work and oral literacy.
6. Application of numeracy	Manipulation of numbers and its application in practical contexts.
7. Application of IT skills	Basic IT skills, spreadsheets, file management, etc.

Table 4. Desired skills and qualities amongst employers. University of Kent.

1. Verbal Communication	2. Teamwork	3. Commercial awareness	4. Analysing and investigating	5. Initiative / Self-Motivation
6. Drive	7. Written Communication	8. Planning and organising	9. Flexibility	10. Time Management

