Somerset’s Strategy for Employment and Skills: Young People aged 14 to 24
2016 to 2019

Draft for consultation  February 2016
Somerset’s Strategy for Employment and Skills:
Young People aged 14-24

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This document summarises the collective views of the Somerset Employment and Skills Writing Team in their co-construction of a Strategy for Employment and Skills for implementation in Somerset during the 2015-2016 Academic Year. The writing team comprised of members of Somerset’s Employment and Skills Group, secondary headteachers, college principals, business leaders and Careers South West. The strategy draws on a number of key Somerset documents, national research and Ofsted documentation.

Please see ‘Somerset’s Strategy for Achieving Excellence for All’, for the broad education picture, including performance data and our ambitious trajectory for improvement.
1. National Context

Nationally the Employability and Skills and Post 16 agenda continues to move quickly. The Government has set a target of three million Apprenticeship starts by 2020, and from August 2017 funding will be initiated for the first time by the employer rather than the training provider, through a new levy and voucher system. The Skills Funding Agency will end in 2017 and its successor is likely to deal exclusively with Apprenticeships. In addition, the new Trailblazer Apprenticeships will be delivered from 2017. These will have an expected focus on end assessments.

Twenty specific new professional and technical routes will be created, leading up to employment or degree-level study, which will be as easy to understand as academic routes. These new routes will lead young people from compulsory schooling into employment and the highest levels of technical competence, which for many will mean moving on to apprenticeships as quickly as possible. Employer understanding and commitment to Apprenticeships is critical if these targets are to be met.

Vocational curriculum in schools is being increasingly side-lined, particularly by the demands of Progress 8 measures and the English Baccalaureate curriculum. Research clearly shows the positive impact that a curriculum which includes a vocational offer can have on a learner’s progress and subsequent life chances, yet finding a pathway that enables schools to offer a balanced curriculum is becoming increasingly difficult. Combine this with the changes to GCSE and A levels, with their focus on linear assessment and the result increasingly being seen is a narrowing of the curriculum offer and ‘extra-curricular’ activities, including Work Experience.

Further Education (FE) Colleges are undergoing the National FE Area Reviews (Somerset College reviews will take place in November 2016) and the impact of these will undoubtedly be felt across the sector. The HOSW Devolution bid has the control of Employment and Skills as its main demand, which would have a major impact on Further Education and in particular the Adult Skills budget.

The Government has launched a scheme through Jobcentre Plus to support and inform 12 to 18 year olds about Traineeships, Apprenticeships, Work Experience Opportunities and employability skills, and it is important that this compliments the work of this strategy and other agencies that have a similar remit. Other planned National initiatives include the creation of an Institute for Apprenticeships, a National Careers Service Digital platform, a Government ‘Find an Apprentice’ employer scheme and a new Youth Obligation to ensure that 18 – 21 year olds on Universal Credit develop appropriate work skills. By 2018, 16-18 performance tables will include apprenticeship results.
Other expected changes include the extension of Adult Loans to 19 year olds with 19+’s being able to take a loan for a level 3 or 4 qualification; and the possible expectation that learners will progress on to Apprenticeships at the end of one year vocational courses at college, increasing the number of Apprenticeship starts by FE colleges.

Post 16 institutions are having to adapt to the substantial numbers of learners required to study English & Maths and the impact of this is being felt both in performance tables and in funding terms. Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) in our institutions is another key enquiry area of focus by the Government who are looking at the quality and effectiveness of provision and the report’s outcomes will undoubtedly drive future initiatives, especially the promotion of Vocational education and recruitment onto Apprenticeships by 16 year olds. Currently only 5% of learners nationally move onto Apprenticeships at the age of 16.

Higher Education numbers are continuing to recover, especially full time Foundation Degrees delivered in FE Colleges. Although improvements to widening participation and fair access continue, absolute disparities in HE participation between advantaged and disadvantaged areas remain large. These differences remain even when prior attainment and ethnic background are taken into account, suggesting that there might be other barriers to HE progression, beyond GCSE attainment and ethnic profile.

Business leaders have highlighted three key actions to help bridge the gap between education and employment:

- Embedding of key employment skills within the curriculum
- Delivery of recruitment and interview technique lessons
- Delivery of careers guidance by local employers

These actions will require employers and education to increase their links and understanding, especially in new business areas like the STEM and Digital sector which will require an ongoing commitment to joint staff CPD and curriculum development.

Research has shown that there is a real mismatch between employers’ expectations of young people and young people’s understanding of what is expected of them. This will only be addressed as employers and education work together to develop new strategies for recruitment. National research has also shown that young people, young people with learning disabilities and care leavers are at most risk of not gaining sustainable employment opportunities. It is increasingly important that these vulnerable learners are supported effectively and that both employers and education have an important role to play in this respect.

The key message for Employability & Skills moving forward is to remain alert, respond quickly and be as flexible as possible.
2. Local Context

It is acknowledged that the overarching priority is to change the culture across Somerset into one where education and employers work together and share the responsibility for the development of our young people and future work force. This strategy for young people will align with and support Somerset’s wider Employment and Skills strategy.

The stature and importance of Careers and Education Information and Guidance (CEIAG) across our Somerset institutions has undoubtedly suffered as other demands have taken priority and reductions in Government funding have impacted. However, as the routes into post 16 education, employment and training have become more diverse and complex the role of CEIAG has never been more important. Ensuring that CEIAG is highly effective across all our institutions and appropriate for all our learners, especially our most vulnerable is a major priority.

Visible and transparent ‘Train the Trainer’ initiatives will see employers and education developing positive relationship and working together to support our teachers and institutions to deliver skills and programmes that will support and challenge every young person to raise aspiration, achieve and prepare them for the world of work and economic and social well-being.

3. Our Aspiration

The 12 – 24 Strategy for Employment and Skills is designed to achieve a fundamental shift in the education system in Somerset towards a more comprehensive understanding, promotion and uptake of an appropriate curriculum, including a vocational and technical offer for young people aged 12 to 24. At its heart it has the belief that every young person has a right to access the best educational opportunities and experiences that will ultimately prepare them for the world of work and economic well-being.

The Strategy has a clear commitment and focus on improving the employability of young people and on meeting the skills needs of the local economy including support for our most vulnerable. It will ensure a coordinated approach to enable and empower all young people and adults in creating enterprise opportunities, access employment or participate in higher levels of learning. The Strategy aligns closely with the Somerset Growth Plan’s 2014-20 vision of ‘An aspirational workforce with world class skills, helping to grow the competitiveness and productivity of Somerset’s businesses’.
There is a need for more rapid developments in Somerset whereby the work of schools, colleges, training providers and employers become better integrated and responds to the needs of young people, adults and the economy. Facilitating and supporting these developments is a key focus for the Employability & Skills Strategy, strengthening the profile of Somerset as a Great place to live and work.

Our aspirations and principles are upheld by our new Children and Young People’s Plan:

- Children and Young People have a voice and are listened to
- Outcomes are improved for all children and young people
- Services are person centred
- The impact of inequalities is reduced
- We work together to coproduce services, align our resources, and jointly commission

4. Our Ambition – What we want to improve

4.1 Improvement in the Quality of Teaching & Learning:

Priorities:

a) Improved Careers Education, Information, Advice & Guidance (CEIAG) across Somerset at all phases:

- To ensure that the CEIAG provision delivered in all of our institutions is of the highest quality and given enough priority within the curriculum to be delivered effectively
- To support the raising of skills achievement at the technical and academic level through clearer career and progression pathways and advice
- To encourage and support school to business engagement
- To implement a Somerset Wide IAG Coordinators Group

b) Post 16 Transition:

- To develop clear processes and communication channels that ensure smooth and effective transition into post 16 education, employment or training through effective partnership working.

c) Staff Development:
• To promote and coordinate the development of life skills and employment-readiness teaching and training, with employers taking a central role
• To provide opportunities for teachers to explore teaching resources that put the curriculum in a real world context.

d) Curriculum Design:
• To promote and coordinate the building of a bank of relevant curriculum resources designed by employers
• To influence the development of relevant technical and vocational programmes that offer higher level (L3 and L4) qualifications and which meet the needs of our local employers
• To influence and coordinate the development of the STE(A)M Skills Base to support the growth of the Somerset Economy
• To influence and coordinate the development and delivery of Creative Thinking Skills across all curriculum areas
• To develop a range of package of work ready skills projects/ schemes of work that link to employer plans and needs and are aligned to Somerset’s future economic and business opportunities
• Communicate opportunities for incorporating a business element into the design of vocational curriculum.

e) Traineeship, Apprenticeship and Internship promotion and delivery:
• Work with education and employers to ensure that training and apprenticeships are sustainable, fit for purpose and meets individual needs, including our most vulnerable learners.

4.2 The Development of Leadership, including Governance:

a) Curriculum and Promotion of Traineeships, Apprenticeships and Internships:
• Work in partnership with employers and education to support all employers, especially SMEs to develop and support work related training
• Promote the ethos, values and culture of learning that are distinctively geared towards the task of business formation and growth, wealth creation and employment outcomes
• Reinforcing the message at every opportunity that a learner’s journey into employment / enterprise is as crucial as outcome as exam attainment.

b) Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance:
• To organise and promote teacher INSET sessions that raise awareness of career pathways, skill requirements and Somerset employment opportunities and needs
• Organisation and development of Parent specific IAG events.

c) Partnership working between Employers and Education:
• To increase the opportunities provided by local employers and charitable organisations to develop a range of supported employment opportunities to allow every vulnerable or SEND learner to access opportunity, destination or employment in their local community
• To organise and promote employer/education CPD initiatives
• Promotion of Enterprise Societies in Schools and Colleges
• To be a champion of Employability & Skills across Somerset
• Development of high quality Work Experience Opportunities for all our learners and especially those who are most vulnerable.

d) September Guarantee and Reduction in NEETs:
• Reducing the number of those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) through a seamless joined up approach to tracking and supporting all young people on to appropriate post 16 provision and throughout their post 16 journey.
• Effective Data collection, transfer and sharing between partners
• Undertaking audits of transition and retention, and acting on any identified issues
• Tracking of Apprenticeship completions
• Tracking of A Level / Sixth Form students
• Two way reporting systems of destination information between phases and institutions.

e) Governance:
• To establish and promote ‘Governors with link to Careers’ role within every institution
• Promote the ‘Governor in the wider community’ objective through employer led projects
• To ensure Governors, teachers and parents are aware of and engage with the Somerset Employability & Skills agenda
• To compile a database of parents willing to be involved in Employability & Skills promotion.

4.3 The Development of the Self-Improving Education System:

a) Employer and Education Commitment to Excellence:
• Creating and Promoting a shared commitment amongst our business community and training providers to realise and celebrate local talent
• Working with all partners to communicate with a shared common language and an open and supportive dialogue
• To identify potential links between providers and businesses that can help support and be beneficial to both.

b) Work with Institutions:
• To work with partners to ensure that provision is suitably flexible, demand led and able to meet the needs and opportunities of our growing economy
• Coordinated and streamlined use of data and data sharing protocols
• Integration of new Enterprise Coordinators and Enterprise Advisors
• Employability & Skills as part of all School Improvement Plans
• Development of a handbook for employers on how to communicate with schools about employability offers (e.g. EDF Inspire)

c) Working with Teaching Schools:
• Liaising with our three Somerset Teaching Schools to develop a programme of CPD activities that help reinforce and develop employer/education links

5. Our Key Priorities

Priority 1. To develop a Strategy for Somerset where employers and education work together to develop a common language and ambition to support and prepare young people for the world of work and economic wellbeing and which compliments and contributes to existing local and national skills agendas.

What we need to do:
• Create a Strategic Employability & Skills Education group that can keep up to date with current needs and provision that can respond quickly to changing situations and can influence and support a range of initiatives and innovations.
• To promote Learning & Employment zones that become a one-stop hub for all services linked to successful transition from education to employment.
• Development of a Somerset Area Prospectus that reaches every home in Somerset through a variety of means including online, social media and hard copy.
• Review barriers to participation and implement strategies to overcome them.
• Ensure alignment with related strategies, groups and plans.

Priority 2. To develop a joined-up approach to Employment & Skills across all Local Authority services that is understood by all and acted upon effectively.

What we need to do:

• Develop a network of Governors with Employability & Skills responsibility who can support and lead the challenge to schools about the embedding of related initiatives.
• Ensure people with SEND and health and social care needs, their families and carers are provided with robust, timely and appropriate advice and information to enable them to gain employment, and schedule a programme of workshops for local employers to raise awareness about the support available to employers and the benefits of employing people with SEND and health and social care needs.

Priority 3. To understand, contribute to and coordinate the range of Employability & Skills provision already on offer in Somerset and ensure the effective dissemination and take-up of initiatives across our employer, education and voluntary sector community.

What we need to do:

• Bring key stakeholders together to understand, promote and organise a coherent and efficient programme of provision and ensure it reaches key target areas, avoids duplication and which supports voluntary organisations to participate.
• Work with schools and colleges to host an IAG tab on institution websites that will provide independent and impartial CEIAG for parents, students and teachers.
• Work with key employment sectors to identify the skills and qualifications that potential employers require and formulate an action plan that brings together relevant parties to create sector specific projects and initiatives.

Priority 4. To inform, develop, promote and implement a comprehensive range of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) initiatives that will ensure all young people in Somerset are inspired, understand and supported to make the best choices about their own futures, especially the opportunities that exist in Somerset. To ensure young people are confident and motivated to gain and sustain employment; to ensure employers are confident to employ young people, including those with SEN or Health & Social Care needs.

What we need to do:
- Share in the planning and support of local events including HE and Careers Fairs, Job Fairs, Enterprise events and national initiatives that benefit Somerset.
- Develop and promote an Apprenticeship preparation training programme and coordination of Apprenticeship Ambassador Initiatives in schools.
- Promote the recruitment of apprentices in our schools and colleges.
- Coordinate and lead on CEIAG training across Somerset and host regular IAG Staff forums.
- Work with schools and colleges to educate teachers on the importance of CEIAG and the latest developments and skills needs.

**Priority 5.** To work with institutions and partnerships to promote and instigate a curriculum that provides every learner with an appropriate pathway of learning that aligns with workforce development forecasts, minimises barriers and includes the creative skills to maximise future life and work opportunities.

**What we need to do:**

- Development and promotion of flexible vocational and academic routes that are informed by LMI data and include Maths and English, employability skills, Work Experience and CEIAG and which meet Progress 8 and EBacc demands.
- Development of Employer Led curriculum – through projects, lesson plans and delivery, especially Literacy, Numeracy and STEAM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics).
- Development and promotion of activities that help to embed the Creative and personal skills identified and required by employers.
- Defined 12-24 pathways into employment for SEND learners, linking to pupil premium and with bespoke employer involvement.

**Priority 6.** To reduce the number of NEET young people in Somerset through the development of appropriate data reporting systems and re-engagement activities, with special focus on key transition points.

**What we need to do:**

- To support the development of an Online Information and Recruitment portal
- Provide relevant LMI and employability relevant information for the County Data Packs
- Establish a robust system of data tracking and data sharing across institutions and providers in order to reduce NEET figures at 16, 17 and 18.
• Implement strategies and projects to improve transition and retention at 16, 17 and 18, through improved communication and joint working practices.

Priority 7. To raise the profile and importance of Skills & Employability work at all levels, especially with parents and teachers, and through the evidencing of work to Ofsted outcomes alongside the development and implementation of joint Charters, Standards and Awards.

What we need to do:

• Development of Teacher / Employer CPD Work Experience programmes that improve links and understanding of education and business
• Development of mentor and coaching programmes in schools
• Awareness, development and promotion of high quality Work Experience opportunities with employers which are fully supported by schools/colleges.
• Research, develop and support establishments to become centres of excellence for CEIAG and Work Experience through established Standards.
• Development and implementation of a Business/Education Charter.

Priority 8. To support Employers to review and develop their work with young people, including recruitment procedures, development of transferable skills and the promotion of programmes including Traineeships, Apprenticeships and Internships.

What we need to do:

• Develop and roll out training on recruitment procedures suitable for young people, including competency frameworks
• Liaise with Teaching Schools to deliver joint employer and teacher CPD.
• Providing information to encourage development and instigation of Traineeships, Apprenticeships and Internships, especially with SMEs.
6. The role of the LA

Priorities:

- Development of a handbook for employers on how to communicate with schools about employability offers (e.g. EDF Inspire) – including key education contacts, mapping of provision, employment register, etc.
- Development of a Common Language and efficient links to other Children’s Services and partnerships to ensure a joined-up single offer approach
- Development of PR Strategy to promote Employability & Skills
- LA at the centre of NEET prevention, re-engagement and progression – through the coordination of data protocols, sharing, communication
- Raising the profile and importance of CEIAG provision within educational establishments and providing accountability parameters
- Establishment and dissemination of an Online and Paper Area Prospectus
- Support for Local Area Apprenticeship portal
- Working in Partnership to reinforce and expand training and learning capacity in key Somerset sectors – including Nuclear, Marine, Big Data, Aerospace, Construction and Advanced Manufacturing. Increasing the quality and value of well-established sectors including Food and Drink processing, land and water management, tourism and logistics – all sectors which contribute to the Somerset economy.
- Research and develop new pathways into high value employment
- Working with providers to develop a coordinated and relevant higher level skills programmes that are employer led and relevant for Somerset’s growth (SGP). Linked to strong growth hubs at Bridgwater, Frome, Taunton and Yeovil, connected to Somerset’s network of vibrant market towns and rural areas
- FE/HE – Strengthened and coordinated provision – including possible Somerset University developments
- Contribution to Somerset Data packs to include relevant LMI, sector skills forecasts, areas for development (including Higher Skills needs)
- Providing a strategic and coordinating overview of the myriad of Employability & Skills work being undertaken by other agencies to ensure cohesion and avoid overload on establishments.
- To identify key priority target areas (including parents, teachers, sixth form schools) and establish strategies for embedding skills & employability understanding.
- Appraisal and possible roll-out of Somerset wide Enterprise Passports – taking existing best practice and determining a Somerset-wide and LA supported model.