

**PLYMOUTH GROWTH BOARD'S
EMPLOYABILITY TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

PROGRESS REPORT - JULY 2013

Introduction

This paper is a progress report for consideration by the Growth Board's Employment Sub Group on the work of the Employability Task and Finish Group to improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of employability initiatives across Plymouth.

Background

The Growth Board's Employment Sub Group formally established the Employability Task and Finish Group in February 2013. The group meets on a monthly basis and has met five times to-date.

Membership

Organisation	Name	Title
Plymouth City Council	Patrick Knight	Economy and Employment Manager
Plymouth City Council	Heather Ogburn	Senior Leadership Adviser in Education, Learning & Families
Venus Training & Consultancy Ltd	Jane Kellas	Owner
Plymouth City Council	Josh Bunch	Economic Development Apprentice
Plymouth Learning Trust	Kate Howard	Chief Executive
Plymouth City Council	Kathy McHugo	Leadership Associate in Education, Learning & Families
Plymouth City Council	Linda Crane	Economic Development Officer
City College Plymouth	Mark Beresford	Careers and IAG Manager
Pluss	Mark Hodges	Learning Disabilities and Mental Health Services Manager
Plymouth UTC	Mary Cox	UTC Principal
Careers South West	Colin Shorthouse	Local Services Delivery Manager
Plymouth University	Shirley Walker	Head of Careers and Employability
Prensus Ltd	Elaine Budd	Owner

Context

Governments across the world are working to close the gap between education and the workplace, enabling their citizens to progress from one to the other, support economic growth, navigate changes in working practices and lead fulfilling lives. One common approach is to introduce employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship education into school, college and university experiences of young people as a means to better prepare young people for adulthood and work.

The [UK Government's Heseltine Review](#) recommends:

- “The development of leadership and management skills should be integrated, where appropriate in the education and skills system at every level, from schools through to higher education and vocational skills training”
- “Business engagement should be incorporated far a deeper into the school curriculum in order to develop young people’s understanding of business, increase their employability, and further their understanding of career and future training options”

Plymouth’s local employers and educators in the city have confirmed the need for more young people to be instilled with attitudes and skills that make them ‘job ready’.

Plymouth’s education and training landscape is constantly responding to the national, regional and local skills’ agendas including the development of the new [Plymouth University Technical College](#) (UTC), [Plymouth School of Creative Arts](#) and the proposals for a [Plymouth Studio School](#).

These new institutions will provide additional opportunities but must be seen as part of the changing educational landscape in Plymouth. There are evolving partnerships across the city such as [Plymouth Learning Trust](#) (PLT) representing secondary schools and [Plymouth Teaching School Alliance](#) (PTSA), originally representing primary schools. The PTSA Alliance is being reconfigured to incorporate primary, secondary and Special schools. The new alliance will enable a more integrated education and skills strategy with shared values, principles and priorities. Plymouth City Council is engaged with many aspects of the education and skills developments across the city.

All educational partners require the support of employers and employer forums to develop employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship opportunities for children and young people.

The [Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership](#) (LEP) and Plymouth’s emerging [City Deal](#) recognises the need to support local young people (both in and out of work) with employability opportunities and support as well as up-

skilling the current workforce and supporting the need for independent careers advice and guidance.

Definition

The group began by agreeing a definition of 'employability' for Plymouth, which is as follows:

Employability refers to a person's capability to gain, maintain and progress in employment. In addition to the technical or job specific skills required for different jobs, employers require their employees with personal attributes, attitudes and skills to be successful in all jobs

There are many definitions of employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise and lists of skills employers seek. For any one person, developing an appropriate subset of these and developing and demonstrating different skills/attributes to required levels, is essential.

Employers in Plymouth indicate that they need new employees who are literate, numerate and communicate well, who have a positive attitude towards work, show enthusiasm and commitment, turn up on time, and have basic business awareness. Employability skills that employers seek in any one person require developing to demonstrate different skills/attributes to required levels, as appropriate.

Current research suggests that a high proportion of young people do not develop sufficient employability skills. We need to better understand how and when young people acquire their employability skills from home, education and work experiences and ensure that there is successful transition into further and higher education or employment with training ([Ashridge](#)).

Given the shift from traditional manufacturing employment to more knowledge-intensive industries, demand for STEM and multi-disciplinary skills will increase: such that leadership, adaptability, resilience and value-driven behaviours will become core employability skills. In particular, research confirms that the early development of self-awareness, self-regulation and self-learning are the key to success in both education and employment.

The group agreed to initially focus on addressing the gap in employability attributes in young people (aged 10-19) and deliver a focused provision for this group. Once a credible approach had been developed, this could be expanding to cover adults up to 24 years old and then medium/long term for all adults.

Tasks Achieved to Date

The Employability Task and Finish Group was established to provide a multi-agency forum to:

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- establish a pro-active, co-ordinated approach to employability education, by developing an integrated 'curriculum framework' across primary, secondary, further and higher education in Plymouth
- co-ordinate existing employability, enterprise and entrepreneurial programmes and initiatives to provide learning opportunities for children and young people
- engage employers in providing real work related projects, mentors and role models for children and young people throughout their education
- support young people to make informed choices about their education, training and career futures, at key stages in their educational journey.

Primary, secondary, special, further and higher education providers are now engaged in formulating a pedagogical approach to employability that is cross phase.

Special Education Needs / LDD

The group has also considered how to integrate the needs of Learners with Learning Difficulties (LLD) into the employability programmes (see Appendix A).

There needs to be a review of employability related to Special Education Needs, which could be led by [Pluss](#) and include special school and college representation. Plymouth City Council is also engaging with this agenda and is due to report to a Scrutiny panel on supporting young people with LDD into the world of work (Appendix C), highlighting the importance of a NEET transition support contract, Project Search, Achievement Pluss and other initiatives. Additionally, the new multi- agency Inspire Skills Event Planning Group is now reviewing how to integrate the LLD Aspire event into the established annual Inspire Skills Event.

Areas of Focus

Following a comprehensive review of existing research literature ([Inspiring Impact](#)), the group agreed that the following ten 'areas of focus' should be addressed, as they represent the core competencies and value-based behaviours needed by individuals to lead independent, resilient and fulfilling lives (see Appendix B for details):

Ten Areas of Focus		
1) Leadership skills	4) Customer Service/Business Awareness skills	7) Literacy, numeracy and communication skills
2) Assertiveness, negotiating, persuading & influencing skills	5) Self-management, including organisational, planning & time management skills	8) Career choice, job identification, job-seeking skills
3) Problem solving and adaptability skills	6) Team working skills	9) Self-confidence and resilience

Curriculum Framework

The group has completed an audit of existing employability programmes in Plymouth and assessed these against target age groups and the ten areas of focus (see Appendix B).

The group proposes to support the development of a framework that supports a common approach to employability across primary, secondary, further and higher education. This framework will provide the basis of an employability entitlement which can embed and evidence the ten areas of focus above.

Evidencing Employability

It is important that students can capture and evidence their employability skills gained through employment opportunities, work related learning, enterprise, entrepreneurship or volunteering. This is important evidence when applying for employment or access to further and higher education.

There are various existing 'passports', which could be developed:

- [Plymouth University's 'Plymouth Award'](#) i.e. personal reflective diary following 80 hours of extra-curricular activity
- National - [Children's University Passport](#) (mainly 5-14 cohorts) – this could be adapted to cover a wider range of skills and ages
- [Careers South West](#) - online careers e-portfolio/passportfolio
- [STEM](#) – the STEM4Plymouth network is trialling a new STEM passport with FE, possibly City College Plymouth
- Devonport High School for Boys – has designed its own “passport” which the PLT Careers Education and Guidance network consider could be adapted, using elements of other programmes
- BTEC Employability award - as used in Tower Hamlets
- A Plymouth specific employability passport could be developed as a stand- alone to the other passports (i.e. Children's University and STEM)

Schools and other providers recognise the need to take a pragmatic, common sense approach i.e. to keep the system low maintenance given pressures on teachers/lecturers time and allow each school/FE/HE to adopt the most appropriate approach for them – this could be online or supported by hard copy 'passports' for those students/schools who prefer a less managed system.

Employability Award

The group supports the initial findings of the PLT Careers Network that a new Plymouth-wide Employability Award be set up to encourage young people to participate and enable employers to recognise achievement. This could be based on 'Bronze', 'Silver' and 'Gold' level awards, depending on the levels of employability achieved/evidenced. Potentially, existing initiatives, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award, could be considered as equivalent to the Employability Gold Award standard.

Chartermark

The West of England LEP [Chartermark](#) is supporting a pilot to accredit educational institutions who commit to developing employability skills and this initiative could contribute to future endorsement opportunities for partner organisations.

PLT schools and City College Plymouth are now working to develop a model which can be piloted from January 2014 and rolled out across the city in September 2014.

Work-Related Projects

The group considers that work-related projects, supported by employers, are essential to the successful development of employability skills.

City College Plymouth is a [Gazelle College](#) which is committed to ensuring employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship are embedded in every aspect of learning and much of their student work is based outside the classroom. Students work in 'learning companies' e.g. running their own restaurant, ordering supplies etc. One Gazelle College has bought a health centre and runs it as a business. There may be scope to extend and link new and existing learning companies, so that benefits are spread.

Schools, such as the [All Saints Academy Plymouth](#), are also engaging in many employability initiatives.

Employers

The group propose to enable employers to support education providers, by matching school requests for employer-led work-related projects with the support and specialist skills offered by employers. This co-ordinated approach to employer engagement builds on current opportunities being developed by the UTC and supported in schools and colleges and through the Careers South West/Devon Education Business Partnership contract with schools.

The group wishes to investigate the viability of a 'match-making service', embedded in the proposed new website, where employers can register their willingness to provide specialist support under the ten areas of focus. Schools,

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colleges would upload their requirements for support, specifying support needed under the ten areas and employers could be matched electronically such as industrial experts visiting schools, businesses offering work placements and internships.

(Note: We need to ensure [Chamber of Commerce](#) and [1000 Club](#) and other employers are fully supportive.

Mentors

Mentors play an increasing important role in providing employability skills. There are already various programmes, which provide one to one mentoring, enabling volunteers to share their business and life skills to help young people develop the necessary attitudes and skills to gain employment, learning or volunteering opportunities.

Careers Guidance

There is no longer a statutory requirement for Careers Education Programmes and work related learning in schools; yet there remain expectations of impartial information advice, guidance and support to be provided from years 8 – 13 i.e. up to the age of 18.

Given the importance of raising young people's aspirations and informing their decisions - reinforced by the introduction of Raising the Participation Age - the group have considered the need to raise the awareness of parents directly on careers Information Advice and Guidance (IAG), potentially through:

- informing students and adults of the skill needs of Plymouth's priority sectors e.g. marine, advanced manufacturing based on current labour market information and skills forecasting
- the use of pop up IAG - targeting parents at family centres, libraries, community centres, and expanding the Inspire event; coupled with the use of social media
- career awareness events for Plymouth's priority sectors e.g. Marine, Advanced Manufacturing, Health etc.
- more effective promotion of Raising The Participation Age requirements
- establishment of a 'youth employment hub' to provide independent, accredited, centralised advice and guidance to all young people across the city.

School/college governors are key decision makers in schools and colleges. It is suggested that one staff member in each school/college should be identified to act as a co-ordinator for the employability agenda.

Learning Destinations

Plymouth's [Children's University](#) works with a vast range of formal and informal providers of learning for children and young people and quality assure and accredit them as a quality learning destination against a set framework. This approach could transfer well into this piece of work. Essentially, formal and informal projects and schemes of learning that provide employability skills could self-assess against the employability framework, and after a quick site visit could be validated as an accredited Employability Learning Destination. This could be mapped on the website and the providers could carry the logo/branding. Further work is being undertaken to explore this as an option.

Website

In Plymouth, there are many existing employability programmes, however these are often poorly co-ordinated and the group considers that there is a need to develop a website and improve communication so that better links can be established between students/unemployed young people and employers.

There are several examples of websites that could be used as a model:

- [Schooble](#) website ([Paritor/Plymouth University](#))
- [Careers South West](#) website
- [BEACH](#) website (Brighton Employability Advice and Careers Hut)
- [Plymouth Youth Enterprise](#) is an existing website on enterprise and self-employment- that needs re-invigorating to be fit for purpose
- Insight - EU funded employability initiative focussed on deprived communities in Plymouth, which will promote the use a web-based toolkit and mentoring by existing training providers.

It has been suggested that employers and young people could help design, maintain and promote a one-stop, online employability experience.

Furthermore, the website could be linked to social media - Facebook and twitter – to provide accessible information to young people, supported by lessons on safe use of social media.

Database

To enable and simplify access to education and employment sites, the group propose to establish a site's database holding Health and Safety risk assessment templates and other information needed to arrange work experience, employer visits, etc. This would be hosted on the proposed employability website.

Funding

There is no existing funding to support the co-ordination of employability initiatives as described and recommended above.

One grant application has been submitted - to the Coastal Communities Fund - which could create and provide information tools that will enable young people and their parents to consider a career in the energy efficiency sector.

The group proposes to investigate whether City Deal or other funding source may be available to support the work outlined in this paper.

Recommendations

The Employment Sub Group of the Growth Board is asked to endorse the recommendations of its Employability Task and Finish Group as follows:

1. Plymouth's proposed definition of 'employability' is endorsed.
2. The ten key 'areas of focus' are endorsed.
3. A request to schools and colleges to further develop a city-wide 'employability entitlement' and to support the work of the cross phase planning group.
4. Schools and colleges are requested to investigate how a non-bureaucratic city-wide Employability Award could be developed at gold, silver and bronze level - evidenced either on-line or in a passport - to include an element of self-reflection by the student to capture their learning and skills development in line with the 10 key areas of focus.
5. The Chamber of Commerce and 1000 Club are invited to work in partnership with the Employment Sub Group to endorse and become early adopters of the education/employer match-making process in advance of its launch.
6. An SEN / LDD review of employability is undertaken through a task group, led by Pluss and including Local Authority, secondary and special schools and college representation.
7. The Local Authority, Plymouth Learning Trust, Plymouth Association of Primary Heads, Special Schools Association of Plymouth, City College Plymouth and Plymouth College of Art work to ensure that each school and college in the city has an identified governor who acts as a link for the employability and IAG agenda.
8. An employability learning destination framework is established to recognise non-education based quality providers of employability skills.
9. Establish a database holding Health and Safety risk assessment templates and other information needed to arrange work experience and employer visits.
10. To investigate a 'match making service' for employers to link up to schools and colleges.
11. Discussions commence with Paritor to consider using its Schooble website to design and host Plymouth's proposed employability website, which will include Plymouth's definition of employability; the ten key areas

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of focus; the outcomes of the mapping exercise of existing employability provision; relevant links to other websites and social media; the education/employer match-making process and the mapped locations of validated employability learning destinations.

12. The feasibility of attracting external funding (e.g. City Deal) is investigated to cover set up costs.

Ref: DEV/EDS/ED/Projects/Worklessness/Meetings/EmployabilityT&FG/EmployabilityReportFinalDraft