

STEM Applications and Apprenticeships Review

2nd December, 2014

PRESENT:

Councillors L. Hughes, Lister and T. Richmond.

Paul Richardson, Head of 11-19 (Learning and Skills); Owen McAteer, Foundation for Jobs Co-ordinator; Suzanne Clark, Employability and Skills Manager; and Allison Hill, Democratic Officer.

PURPOSE OF REVIEW:

To examine what is being done to enable young people to understand the applications of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) subjects and the opportunities that are available for apprenticeships and careers.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

Support for smaller SME's and the creation of apprenticeships for young people:

- The definition of a Small Medium Enterprise (SME) is a company with less than 250 employees.
- Most companies in Darlington are classed as SME's by definition
- SME's receive support by a wage grant and in the last 12 months there have been a number of schemes to incentivise employers by offering a wage support grant.
- Companies can also bid for money through the Department for Works and Pensions and the Job Centre.
- Foundation for Jobs offer support to employers who do not have dedicated Human Resources and can offer advice on Insurance and employment.
- The majority of SME's have not taken on apprenticeships as they have concerns that it is too complicated but Foundation for Jobs are there to offer support and advise to those companies and to encourage and help them through that process.
- The last scheme offered by the Council helped 79 SME's over a 6 month period to take on an apprentice.

- Small companies can have difficulties in undertaking the full framework for apprenticeships, especially in construction where it takes 18 months to complete a Level 1 or 2 apprenticeship.
- Companies are also less reluctant to take on apprenticeships in the current financial climate.
- However, work with the SME's who have taken on apprenticeships has been successful and this can be measured by the fact they continue to take on new apprentices.
- There is a Wage Subsidy Grant available through Tees Valley Unlimited (TVU) and apprenticeships through the Engineering Companies are usually 4 years.

Examining the link between education and employment away from the University route, NEET and the work of the ESH Group.

- It was felt that there may be a lack of understanding among young people on what a career in engineering means.
- Careers events at Colleges, attended by the larger engineering companies are important to education young people and parents.
- It was also felt that was a need to change perceptions that young people either go along the GCSE/A Level route or take up an apprenticeship and Members questioned what can be done to educate parents and teachers.
- It was reported that regular careers advice evenings are held in schools and advisors circulate lists of apprenticeship opportunities.
- It has been recognised that there may be some confusion in schools on available apprenticeships and when these are open for application and a working group have been tasked with compiling a list of available apprenticeships and when to apply that can be circulated to schools.
- A shift away from the University route to go into an apprenticeship has been seen and this could be attributed to young people not wanting to get into debt by going to University.
- Higher apprenticeships in engineering companies can lead onto the young person gaining a HND/Diploma through the company.
- Foundation for Jobs work closely with the Darlington College and QE Sixth Form College and have some connection with Carmel College.

- The minimum apprenticeship wage is around £100 a week (£2.73 an hour). This applies to 16-18 year olds and if 19 years for the first year of their Apprenticeship. This is lower than the national minimum wage of £3.70 for under 18's. Although the national average apprenticeship wage is £170.
- There is a Government Scheme 'Inspiring Futures', (<http://www.inspiringfutures.org.uk/>) which is web based, and aims to get schools and companies to sign up to the matching service. This is proving successful in the South but needs further promotion in the north.
- In Darlington we are ahead of the game and have good partnerships working with young people and Foundation for Jobs and in encouraging businesses.
- NEET figures show that there are more 16/17 year olds staying on in education.
- Year 12 – 23 young people NEET (3 not available to the labour market)
- Year 13 – 68 young people NEET (51 available to the labour market; 17 not available ie. teenage mums/young carer)
- Nationally over the last few years there has been a significant drop in apprenticeship numbers across all age groups. Over the last year the number of 16-18 year olds in employment (including apprenticeships) in Darlington has dropped from 334 to 291. This may be due to a number of factors including the requirements of the Raising of the Participation Age.
- As of October 2014 Darlington had the second lowest NEET figures in the Tees Valley (6.3%).
- The ESH Group run employability skills training to schools and is compiled of a number of business organisations working with schools across the north east.
- The Council, through 'Darlington Cares' are working with Whessoe Oil and Gas to deliver skills training to Hummersknott and Hurworth Schools.
- Barclays Life Skills is an education programme designed to give young people in the UK access to the skills they need to make the transition into work. Focusing on key areas of people skills, work skills and money skills. The programme is designed to help students aged 11 to 19 and includes teacher-led activities, interactive online content and school workshops (led by Barclays volunteers or school staff) using LifeSkills materials) that give detail and real-world examples.

- Lloyds and Virgin run similar schemes and it was suggested that these banks be invited in to give more details on how the schemes are delivered and how they can be accessed.

ACTIONS

Invite Barclays/Lloyds/Virgin to attend a future meeting to outline their education programmes for young people.

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