



Cheshire & Warrington Employment & Skills Board

Cheshire and Warrington Employment & Skills Framework - Action Plan 2009-10

Action	Baseline position: North West Employment and Skills Evidence Base(Nov 2008)-P167-169 on Cheshire and Warrington; Cheshire and Warrington14-19 Analysis; Adult Learner Responsive Analysis; Employer Responsive Analysis;(LSC/Local Authorities)	Lead partner/organisation	Review comments
Priority 1. Inform, influence and lobby on skills issues at local and regional level with the aim of affecting improvements to the employment and skills system.			
<p>1.1 Provide an evidence base on skills issues (including current and future skills needs) in the sub-region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share intelligence across the sub-region from bodies like Business Link/Jobcentre Plus. To include the use of existing data wherever possible e.g. through input of board members for specific sectors e.g. JCP statistics. • Carry out joint sub-regional commissioning (when appropriate) to strengthen links between local economic assessments, still reflecting local needs. • Align this framework/action plan with local authority economic development strategies and skills activities; the work of local strategic partnerships (LSP'S) and LAA targets. • Collate and interpret relevant and available data to inform the production of an employment and skills strategy, which brings together existing strategies in C&W. 		<p>LSC</p> <p>Business Link/JCPlus</p> <p>All members, but notably CWEA/3 local authorities</p> <p>All members, but notably CWEA/3 local authorities</p>	



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add value by increasing understanding of local needs and priorities, making it clear how CWESB can influence and have clear impact; make it clear how CWESB adds value to individual partners' agenda. • Develop and implement mechanisms for employers to respond and provide evidence, using business intermediary bodies such as Cheshire Chamber Enterprises, the Birchwood Forum and regional bodies e.g. CAR North West (see also 1.3) NB: such bodies might also be able to assist with design of questionnaires etc. • Disseminate this strategic framework/action plan to key stakeholders 		<p>CCTE/Birchwood Forum</p>	
<p>1.2 Lobby for the area to have sufficient funding to address its needs(both current and future needs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby for more consistency/stability in funding. • Lobby for funded development above Level 2. • Map current investment to address skills needs and use strategy and mapping exercise to inform the production of a draft investment framework. • Links should be made to both the regional and national agendas on employment/skills issues -use links to Regional Employment and Skills Board and its sub groups, and make links into the UK Commission for Employment and Skills. 			<p>Input into the UKCES consultation employer voice project.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify gaps in investment for dissemination to stakeholders. • Link into and use local MP's as appropriate. 			
<p>1.3 Identify need for policy/delivery improvements to Employment/ Skills system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate and consult on draft investment framework. • Establish targets and ownership which align with LAA etc and report regularly against progress. • Promotion of funding for short courses/"bite sized" chunks of learning, not just funding of longer formal qualifications e.g. Skills Pledge Plus event. • Evaluation – lessons learned from other programmes on a local level. Link to similar activity on regional level by NWDA. • More local flexibilities for organisations such as FE Colleges to respond to local skills needs, and build relationships with local employers. • Focus on the impact of activities, not targets and qualifications. 		<p>CWEAS</p>	<p>Skills Pledge Plus C&W event CWESB +CARNW</p>
<p>1.4 Define the role of Board members in acting as "Employer Skills Champions"- agree activity which should be carried out as 'Employer Skills</p>		<p>CWEAS</p>	



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<p>Champions':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor activity of 'champions' through regular updates to board – promoting good practice. • Develop and produce a Directory of "Skills Champions" and case studies to promote the importance of effective investment in workforce development. • Create Aide Memoire to detail the role of a board member. • Identify what is currently working well, and what should be built on. • Share and spread good practice through newsletter and/or other publicity and marketing activity, supported by best practice case studies where possible. • Introduce best practice/success stories as an agenda item at meetings. • Map use of Union Learning reps and how they could be utilised and developed further including best practice model from Royal Mail Learning Centre in Crewe. • Promote to employers the need for them to proactively use the tools and support available. 			<p style="text-align: right;">Aide Memoire created.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Agenda item at each meeting for members to share best practice, which is recorded.</p>
<p>1.5 Develop stronger links between economic priorities</p>			

and Further Education/ Higher Education through the private sector (employer) board:

- Use private sector board “employer voice” to influence/inform local authorities (see also 1.3).
- Strengthen links of Local Authority economic development network group to the FE and HE sector through newsletter.
- Link employers in area/or sector with FE / HE / other providers through a sponsorship agreement.
- Agree what this sponsorship role would be for both parties and sign service level agreements.
- Research into whether the FE sector is delivering skills local business want /need.
- Joint annual meeting of the Private and Public sector boards to be held, to assist in strengthening these links.

Clear Deliverables/Outcomes

- IMPROVED SHARING OF INTELLIGENCE
- MORE EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVELY SHARING GOOD PRACTICE
 - Identify what is currently working well, and that we should build on.
 - Share and spread this good practice through newsletter and/or other publicity and marketing activity, supported by best practice case studies where possible.
 - Develop and produce a Directory of “Skills Champions” and case studies to promote the importance of effective investment in workforce development.
 - Link employers in area or sector with FE / HE or other providers through a sponsorship agreement.
 - Agree what this sponsorship role would be for both parties and sign service level agreements.



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Action	Baseline position:	Lead partner/ organisation	Review comments
<p>Priority 2. Increase the resilience of the local economy by developing stronger links between economic priorities and further/higher education and by ensuring that businesses have easy access to effective business support and high quality skills provision.</p>			
<p>2.1 Increase clarity and level of coherence/integration of support available, update Cheshire and Warrington employer guide as appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop stronger links and clearer progression routes between Further Education and Higher Education, increasing the sharing of good practice (e.g. modular courses). • Strengthen and maintain existing high-quality provision/front-line services in Cheshire and Warrington FE Colleges/training providers. • Increase the involvement of businesses in schools, FE and HE e.g. work related learning, Diplomas, foundation degrees. • Fully utilise business intermediary bodies (Cheshire Chamber Enterprises, Solicitors, Banks, Accountants etc. existing communication channels and networks as well as Business Link Skills Brokers) to make and improve these linkages, breaking down the barriers/perceived barriers businesses have to working with schools, colleges and universities. To include the use of LSC/Chamber Skills Cluster events. 			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and promote existing structures in place for employers working with FE on Diplomas. Through this employers are contributing to curriculum. • CWEAS to make links into existing Diploma Forums. • Mapping of the Diploma related Employer and College structures to inform what is taking place. • Foundation Learning Tier – existing 14-19 Partnership in Warrington and similar structures in Cheshire – amalgamate groups in Cheshire in light of LGR. • Expand and promote apprenticeships for all ages (including Young People Apprenticeships) and Train to Gain programmes. • Facilitate schools, FE and HE engagement in skills development linked to key economic developments such as Omega and the railway infrastructure. • Support and encourage the development of specialist and high quality provision in FE and HE to meet the needs of employers and promote this to employers. • Identify gaps, especially sector gaps, in provision and build provider capacity. • Influence funding to meet gaps in provision. • Support referral mechanisms for employers and provision i.e. strengthen brokerage service, develop 			
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<p>broker awareness of what is available; utilise intermediary bodies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop specialist vocational education and training which matches skills development to the employment opportunities available. (Use Jobcentre Plus and Connexions in this activity). • Work with Sector Skills Councils to develop vocational training. • CWEAS activity/ events to take a sector by sector approach, focussing initially on engineering. 			
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<p>Clear Deliverables/Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FURTHER DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND FE/HE/TRAINING PROVIDERS, INCLUDING LINKS BETWEEN FE/HE AND KEY EMPLOYMENT SITES. 			
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<p>Priority 3. Engage employers to develop their leadership and management skills and increase their commitment to raising the skills of the workforce.</p>			
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<p>3.1 Present a clear offer to employers (reducing duplication) by co-ordinating information, ensuring a coherent and fully integrated offer is made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short, regular newsletter with contact details and no jargon. 			
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities to use CWESB to develop/improve their relationships with local employers. • Simplify the skills offer to employers, particularly via the Business Link website. • Maintaining and updating an employer guide. • More marketing (publicity and awareness raising activities) on opportunities available to employers. • Ensure the offer is marketed as being “Business to Business” i.e. the private sector advising other private sector businesses and encouraging the sharing of good practice. • Map current engagement of brokers onto local network groups, identify gaps and ensure coverage of all employers, particularly small businesses, where stronger emphasis and focus is needed. • Develop a package of different partner “offers” to address different markets e.g. Taking the services to SME’s through events on an Industrial estate; build networks on Business parks; focus on the self-employed and Business start-up’s. • Spread/disseminate existing private sector led models such as Congleton KISS Group and the Birchwood Forum. • Utilise intermediary bodies such as the Chambers of Commerce and LTCW to engage with small 		<p>Guide created, review date March 2010.</p>
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businesses.			
<p>3.2 Stimulate demand for and access to publicly funded business support (via Business Link):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider alternatives to qualifications-don't assume this is what all employers want. • Influence sub regional ERDF bids to ensure local actions support stimulating demand and support access to support. 			
<p>3.3 Improve leadership and management skills (inc coaching skills), especially at first line supervisor level via masterclasses, business networks and training (particularly in the workplace):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use evidence base identified in Priority 1 above. 			
<p>3.4 Promote good employment practice and relations-highlight examples of good practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C&W Employer Relations Forum to take place bi-annually, supported by ACAS led advisory surgeries. • Coordinate information from other public bodies through the Forum e.g. HSE and CARNW (for IIP). 			<p>Two successful ERF held in 2009, with high employer attendance and excellent feedback.</p>
<p>3.5 Promote equality and diversity and inclusive practice, including support for older workers:</p>			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand to reference ex-offenders; the disabled; minority ethnic groups and lone parents. • Raise board members awareness of regional 50+ regional strategic frameworks. • Use research and programmes from University of Chester to raise awareness of 50+ strategy, issues and benefits. • Research into need and areas of good practice promoted through the newsletter. 		
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<p>Clear Deliverables/Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIMPLIFY THE SKILLS OFFER TO EMPLOYERS, PARTICULARLY VIA THE BUSINESS LINK WEBSITE. • MORE MARKETING PUBLICITY AND AWARENESS RAISING ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING EMPLOYER GUIDE UPDATES) ON OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO EMPLOYERS. • STIMULATE DEMAND FOR AND ACCESS TO PUBLICLY FUNDED BUSINESS SUPPORT(VIA BUSINESS LINK IN PARTICULAR)
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Priority 4. Encourage, stimulate and support the development of employment opportunities for local people, and the adoption of good employment and skills practice.			
4.1 Increase apprenticeship opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set targets and monitor progress. 		The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular updates with examples of good practice reported to employer. 			
<p>4.2 Increase commitment to the Skills Pledge (by promoting the business benefits) and take up of workforce development training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to the challenge of the current economic climate-for example, through reskilling Establish targets for the signing up of the skills pledge. (i.e. How many?) Local authorities and public sector organisations to provide young people with valuable work experience. Maximise the take-up of the Future Jobs Fund and Flexible New Deal Help small businesses to overcome barriers to skills development, such as time off for individuals Increase number of employers signing up to the skills Pledge against targets. Share targets through networks Agree exemplary employer criteria for employment/skills practice and promote, supported by the Aide Memoire. Utilise UK Skills Passports, promoting to both students and employees, and encouraging them to 			<p>CWEA facilitated successful sub regional FJF bid.</p>

Sign up to them. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist businesses with succession planning 			
4.3 Ensure effective support for expanding businesses and those moving into the area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight support available to inward investing and expanding employers via the employer sector board and the LA and other networks as appropriate. 			
Clear Deliverables/Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INCREASE APPRENTICESHIP OPPORTUNITIES • INCREASE COMMITMENT TO THE SKILLS PLEDGE (BY PROMOTING THE BUSINESS BENEFITS) AND TAKE UP OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING 			

Action	Baseline position:	Lead partner/organisation	Review comments
Priority 5. Making Young People and Adults Work Ready, addressing employability skills.			
5.1 Make it easier for employers to recruit local people with the right skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise employer awareness of the support available to up skill workers and cope with redundancies. • Brief Connexions and other partners on the 	North West Employment and Skills Evidence Base(Nov 2008)-P167-169 on Cheshire and Warrington; Cheshire and Warrington14-19 Analysis; Adult Learner Responsive Analysis; Employer Responsive Analysis;(LSC/Local Authorities)		JCP meeting communicating offer to employers.



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<p>employment opportunities available in particular sectors, using Sector Skills Councils as appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Target businesses with recruitment difficulties via existing networks.• Focus on the important 18-24 age group• Improve transport access to key employment sites• Assist businesses to prepare for the upturn, including skills required-link to NWDA report on future skills for the region.• Assist businesses prepare for the transition to a low carbon economy including skills required. Link to NWDA report on climate change.• Promote Local Employment Partnerships, diplomas, Train to Gain, Apprenticeships to employers.• Establish local targets and update progress through newsletter and other communications mechanisms.• Map and strengthen local Integrated Employment and Skills (IES) partnership arrangements.• Promote the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) Vacancy Matching Service.• Use brokerage service, Connexions, Next Steps and JCP to promote the whole offer to employers through joint working and marketing.• Carry out Transferable Skills Audits of those being			
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<p>made redundant, and link to employment opportunities currently available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with providers to build in employability skills into all programmes. • Promote the economic benefits of volunteering. • Ensure that links into and out of labour markets bordering Cheshire and Warrington, including Greater Manchester and Halton, are included as part of all the actions in this action plan. 			
<p>5.2 Target areas of highest unemployment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for expanding businesses and those moving into the area • Highlight support available for inward investment to LA via newsletter and other marketing opportunities and relevant networks. 			
<p>5.3 Develop a strategy to attract and retain graduates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce graduate numbers emigrating abroad for employment opportunities (for example, in the rail industry). • Improve destination tracking, developing a mechanism to measure the number of local graduates obtaining jobs in the sub-region i.e. Destination Analysis. 			



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure activities are commissioned to minimise the underemployment of graduates 			
<p>5.4 Reduce numbers of individuals not in employment, education or training(NEET):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement specific actions to target adults, particularly the over 50's e.g. reskilling for a new career • Work with Connexions to help businesses to understand factors behind the NEET figures and support priority groups and schools, colleges, training providers and the third sector. 			

<p>Clear Deliverables/Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WORK WITH PROVIDERS TO BUILD IN EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS INTO ALL PROGRAMMES • TARGET AREAS OF HIGHEST UNEMPLOYMENT • DEVELOP A STRATEGY TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN GRADUATES • REDUCE NUMBERS OF INDIVIDUALS NOT IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION OR TRAINING(NEET) 			
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<p>Priority 6. Improve the coordination, quality of, and access to, employment and skills activities in the sub-region.</p>			
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<p>6.1 Develop appropriate partnerships and delivery</p>			
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infrastructure:

- Produce and regularly use a diagram to show how all the different groups, organisations and initiatives in the sub-region fit together(see attached diagram)
- Brief the Board on the Machinery of Government Changes and gain the commitment of new government agencies (especially the Skills Funding Agency) to supporting implementation of this strategy.
- Map existing structures in each LA area that are supporting IES to include partnerships for the 14-19 age groups.
- Gain the commitment to drive and support the framework and this action plan from all partners, but notably the local authorities (including Councillors).
- Where needed, support the development of local structures to support an IES strategy in each local authority area across Cheshire and Warrington.
- Maximise linkages with existing business networks, using business intermediaries where possible and appropriate.
- Promote the work of National Skills Academies, encouraging where appropriate a sub-regional presence.
- Provide more information for Cheshire and Warrington organisations on how to become a service provider.

Sub regional architecture diagram created and distributed to local partners.



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop closer links between large employers and smaller businesses.• Make employers aware of the support available via Next Steps. | | | |
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Clear Deliverables/Outcomes

- DEVELOP APPROPRIATE PARTNERSHIPS AND DELIVERY INFRASTRUCTURE
- MAXIMISE LINKAGES WITH EXISTING BUSINESS NETWORKS, USING BUSINESS INTERMEDIARIES WHERE POSSIBLE AND APPROPRIATE