

Update on the Oxfordshire Skills Board and work undertaken on skills priorities across the county

July 2013

Oxfordshire Skills Board

Oxfordshire Skills Board was established in September 2011 and brings together a wide range of public and private employers, secondary, further and higher education skills providers and stakeholder groups. It is chaired by Adrian Lockwood, MD of Integration Technology Ltd, a Bicester based small business.

It aims to develop a strategic and coordinated approach to skills development in Oxfordshire to:

- Ensure that all residents are able to develop the skills that enable them to successfully enter and remain in the workforce
- Assist local employers to develop or access the training they require to equip their workforce with the skills they need
- Enable all residents to make a positive contribution to their communities

The board works closely with the Local Enterprise Partnership who have 'devolved' their skills priorities to it.

Founded by a 'coalition of the willing' the Skills Board is now moving to the next level of maturity as it contributes to the skills related core package City Deal negotiations.

The second Skills Needs Analysis* evidence paper commissioned by the skills board resulted in the following priorities being identified:

- Developing better employability skills for young people, whilst in school and post 16 education with the emphasis on problem solving, team working and customer awareness.
- Impartial information, advice and guidance for young people ensuring those delivering this service are more aware of local labour market intelligence.
- Increasing the number of people taking up training in science, technology, engineering and maths particularly at higher levels.
- Increasing the number of people taking up apprenticeship provision and increase the number of SMEs that take on apprentices.
- Analysis of the real time needs of Oxfordshire's employers to influence skills providers to align their courses to what local employers need.

An Oxfordshire Skills Summit, involving key providers and businesses is being planned for autumn.

[*http://www.oxfordshireskillsboard.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Oxfordshire-Skills-Needs-Analysis-2-April-2013-final.pdf](http://www.oxfordshireskillsboard.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Oxfordshire-Skills-Needs-Analysis-2-April-2013-final.pdf)

Government Skills Funding into Oxfordshire

Oxfordshire receives c£95m of government skills funding annually made up of £70 million from the Education Funding Agency (for 16-18 learners) and c£25 million from the Skills Finding Agency (for adult skills delivery and apprenticeships).

In 2011/12, **excluding** 16-18 apprenticeship funding the Skill Funding Agency funded 472 providers, totalling £18,914,000 to deliver programmes to Oxfordshire residents. 11 providers managed contracts in excess of £250,000 per annum totalling £11,437,129.

In the same year, **excluding** 16-18 apprenticeship the SFA funded 292 providers totalling £18m of SFA to deliver in Oxfordshire, of which 78% of qualifications were delivered to Oxfordshire residents. Oxfordshire's 'top 20' providers by volume drew– c£14m of SFA funds

Regardless of which way the data is interpreted there is little, if any formal correlation between the way in which skills funds are awarded nationally, the skills priorities of the local area and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

What is being delivered in our priority sector areas to Oxfordshire residents?

Priority sectors – 19+	No. of learning aims	% all aims, inc community learning	No. providers delivering in sector area
Science & Mathematics	361	0.9	30
Engineering & Manufacturing	1,560	3.9	215
Retail	788	2.0	49
Health & Social Care	1,600	4.0	148
Hospitality & Catering	850	2.1	79
Employability Skills/Basic Skills	13,764	34.6	207

For 19+ skills less than 5% of delivery is used to support science, technology, engineering and manufacturing activity – less than 2,000 aims. These are key skills identified by local employers.

City Deal

The Skills Board is supporting the development of the skills asks of the City Deal proposals and vision.

The vision builds on our potential to develop and better align an 'all age' education system that supports our local employment sectors – creating a 'world class' skills eco-system to support our world class big science sectors. It will require a step change in approach, attitudes and aspiration from all stakeholders, however success will deliver;

- Greater local influence and determination over national skills funding streams into the County – with greater freedom and flexibility of its use.
- A workforce aligned to employers needs by a skills eco-system that places employers and well informed individuals at its heart.
- A training and education sector that is more flexible and responsive to employer demands and produces employment ready students.
- A strategic, aligned and co-ordinated continuum between high quality locally accredited work experience, information, advice and guidance, business engagement, traineeships, apprenticeships, further and higher education.

The current mismatch between skills delivery and business need is evidenced by Culham Centre for Fusion Energy - who report over 70 skilled vacancies and;
'going forward we envisage needing many more engineers and technicians to support our future Fusion technology roadmap which includes developing centres of excellence in remote handling, materials testing and other specialist areas....at present the single greatest risk to CCFE is the lack of skilled technicians.'

British Gas – who have recently consolidated some Slough, Reading and Staines operations into a new 740 desk site in Oxford report;
'British Gas Business employs people with similar skill sets in Oxford and Leicester where the cost of living is perceived to be lower.'

Whilst we endeavour to attract candidates close to Oxford, we sometimes find it difficult to find the skills and experience locally. There is a shortage of similar large companies in Oxford where we can find for example business to business accounting experience in a large company. Oxford has a high concentration of public sector employment through the hospitals, universities etc. Whilst there are some transferable skills, this can lead to recruitment challenges as well. This again can lead to us having to employ people who commute from other locations'

A skills strategy, a prerequisite of city deal negotiations is being developed by the skills board – the first draft of which will be presented at its meeting 22 July.

Discussions have taken place between the Chair of the Skills Board and Oxfordshire’s college principals to explain our City Deal approach and the rationale behind our asks. Two have now confirmed their written support with the other expected to follow

Apprenticeships

The drive on Apprenticeships is being led by Oxfordshire Apprenticeships, an informal Oxfordshire wide partnership of local councils, training providers and the National Apprenticeship Service who are using a combination of face-to-face briefings, online resource and social media to help businesses and other audiences ‘make sense’ of Apprenticeships. It provides a local response service and information/contact point to help employers and individuals engage. Local priorities are to increase Apprenticeship take-up particularly amongst SMEs and at advanced/higher levels.

Specific activities recently undertaken include:

- Delivering “Making Sense of Apprenticeships” sessions for businesses (6 to date) and numerous business network briefings and Apprenticeship surgeries.
- Creation of dedicated LinkedIn and Twitter information and networking facilities.
- Development of online information and support through a dedicated webpage including factsheets for employers, local contacts and clear information www.oxfordshireskillsboard.org/apprenticeships
- Supporting delivery of Apprenticeship fairs at Marlborough School and North Oxfordshire Academy.
- Coordinating local activity during National Apprenticeship Week 2013.
- ‘Pop up’ *ApprenticeShops* during the summer

Latest data - Q3 12/13 apprenticeship figures for Oxfordshire

Starting Age of Apprentices	Number of Starts	Is this up or down on last year?	What’s happening in the South East?	What’s happening Nationally?
16	258	▲ 5.3%	▼ 13.3%	▼ 19.4%
17	278	▼ 4.5%	▼ 9.8%	▼ 18.2%
18	435	▲ 2.8%	▼ 2.8%	▼ 5.3%
16-18 Total	971	▲ 1.3%	▼ 7.4%	▼ 13.0%
19-24	1,122	▼ 1.8%	▲ 4.3%	▲ 2.8%
25+	1,188	▼ 11.9%	▼ 6.4%	▼ 8.0%
All Age Total	3,281	▼ 4.9%	▼ 3.0%	▼ 6.0%

Raising of the Participation Age

From 2013/14 all young people in England are required to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17. This raises to 18th birthday from 2015. If they are in work they must be taking some form of accredited training – although there are no penalties for either the young person or the employer should this not be the case.

The County Council is responsible for the statutory duty to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for 16 and 17 year olds. It has developed a 100% participation strategy to deliver:

- e-learning materials aimed at those young people in jobs without training
- management of the OCC Education Funding Agency contract to commission local niche providers to deliver flexible, alternative provision aimed at young people not engaged in any form of employment, education or training.
- activities to increase the take up of apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds (as described above)

Developing employability skills of young people

The County Council manages work experience placements at pre and post 16 through services sold to schools, colleges and training providers. These services include engaging employers to offer placements and ensuring sites are health & safety compliant. The team has contact with c3500 businesses (c15% market penetration) – in 12/13 1,520 employers were visited and 7,340 placements were supported.

In response to employer challenges on employability skills the team is exploring the integration of employability skills training in pre-16 work experience placements. This could add significant value to the work experience placement for young people and employers and would record employability skills developed on placement that are validated by the employer forming part of the young person's CV or skills portfolio and a basis for future training/development.

Research has recently been commissioned by the Skills Board to better understand the current linkages between education and business and to identify how these might be improved to address skills challenges. This will report in late July.

Labour Market Intelligence

The 2nd Skills Needs Analysis evidence has recently been produced and disseminated to partners and stakeholders. This information can be used by skills providers across all sectors so they are better placed to meet local skills needs.

This analysis was used to identify priorities actions and will be used to inform the development of the skills strategy.

Recently purchased 'Labour Insight' software provides access to real time data on current vacancies locally, including an analysis of skills required. This will be used to develop regular labour market information which will be shared with partners and local providers to help shape future skills provision.

OCC's economy and skills team is keen to exploit intelligence gleaned via the planning system to better understand what jobs are being created both at pre application and formal application

stages. This will form part of a holistic understanding of our local labour market- intelligence which will then be shared with partners.

Science Vale UK Skills Project

The Enterprise Partnership was granted £100k Enterprise Zone Skills Fund by the Skills Funding Agency to enable the Enterprise Partnership and Enterprise Zone to work in partnership with employers, colleges and independent providers to ensure that the provision of skills is tailored to local needs. This work is overseen by an SVUK Skills steering group made up of training providers, FE Colleges, HE institutions, primary schools, secondary schools, National Careers Service and employers including the SVUK business parks.

The SFA required a skills priorities report, of which two elements (SVUK Skills Needs Analysis and 'So What is Needed?' paper) are now complete. The SVUK Implementation/Investment Plan is now nearing completion.

The Steering Group has developed a 'Skills Pathway' which supports local employers through the skills system, and the Apprenticeship Launchpad has been created for young people in Year 10 to find out about apprenticeship opportunities in the science, technology, engineering and manufacturing sectors. The steering group is working jointly with Science Oxford and their STEM Ambassador Scheme, and has arranged five after-school sessions with local companies as well as a visit to the NEC Skills Show.

Three elements of the Skills Pathway have formed an Employer Ownership of Skills Pilot bid, led by Culham Centre for Fusion Energy (CCFE) which covers:

- Development of employer-led modules
- Development of a training voucher scheme
- Employer-led business-to-business support

A £2.6m bid was submitted in March, potentially leveraging in an additional £3.5m employer investment and £710k in-kind contributions. Work is continuing to develop the full bid for submission in October, alongside on-going development of the elements.

Skills Reward Grant

The Skills Reward grant funding of £450,000 is managed by OCC, Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council and Job Centre Plus. The grant is being used to fund six community led work clubs in Oxfordshire's most deprived wards with the aim of helping people develop skills that will enable them to progress into sustainable employment. To date over 350 people have been assisted through these job clubs.

The 'team' has also commissioned the development of an employability skills online matching tool, 'Talent Match', with employers local to our most deprived areas feeding in their skills requirements (200 employers are registered to date). This was launched earlier this month and is used by the work clubs to better understand the skills local employers are looking for, match their skills against what employers need, and sign post individuals to providers that can help them develop new relevant skills.