



**Minutes of Joint Cornerstone
Employers & Steering Group
Meeting
Thursday, 11 February 2021**

Steering Group	Paddy Bradley (PB), SWLEP CEO	✓
	Daniel Busson (DBs), Lead Employer Capita WFM	Apologies
	Sally Burnett (SB), Swindon Borough Council	Apologies
	Scott Green (SG), Regional Lead CEC	Apologies
	Steven Haines (SH), Wiltshire Council	✓
	Tina Pagett (TP), Lead SEND Provider, Fairfield Farm College	Apologies
	Louise Stanton (LS), Lead School, Malmesbury School	✓
	Shona Taylor (ST), Wiltshire Council	✓
	Mandy Timbrell (MT), Wiltshire Council/SWLEP Skills Lead	Apologies
	Amanda Walton (AW), Lead College/Post 16, New College, Swindon	Apologies
Cornerstone Employer Group	Claudia Beaumont (CB), Strategic HR Business Partner, Wiltshire Council	✓ - left the meeting at 11.30am
	Alison Bond (AB), Senior Employer Engagement Manager (West), CEC	✓
	Gracie Bridger (GB), Academy Apprentice, The Academy, Great Western Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	
	Daniel Busson (DBs), Operations Director Capita Workforce Management	As above
	Leanean Callender (LC), Early Engagement Client Partner, Network Rail	
	Heather Ford (HF), Business Services Manager, Chipside	
	Richard Kavanagh (RK), Youth Engagement, Military Civil Integration, Headquarters South West	✓
	Caroline Noon (CN), Apprenticeship Manager, National Trust	✓ - left the meeting at 10.30am
	Darren Salmons (DS), Practice Manager, Transportation, Atkins Global	
	Rachel Smith (RS), Early Careers Adviser, Great Western Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	✓



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	Nicola Summerill (NS), Head of Practice Education and Apprenticeships, Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust	
	Freyja Viveash (FV), Chipside	
Guests:	Becca Thurston (BT) and Eva Jefferies (EJ) of Wessex Water Dragana Houston (DH), SWLEP	✓ ✓
Chair	Paddy Bradley (PB)	
Minutes	Deborah House (DKH)	
Venue	Via video / telephone conference	
Start time	10am	
Finish time	12 noon	

Item	Topic	Deadline
1.0	Welcome and apologies, Conflicts of Interest	
	PB welcomed attendees to the joint meeting of the Cornerstone Employers and the Steering Group and introductions were made. Apologies were noted. Conflicts of Interests None were declared.	
2.0	Purpose of the joint meeting and role of the Steering Group	
	PB explained to the attendees that the joint meeting of the Steering Group with the Cornerstone Employers Group was the first of its type which SWLEP hoped would be held regularly. The Cornerstone Employers' Group was essential to the function of the Careers Hub and the whole thrust of the demand-led nature of careers and employment opportunities across the sectors. The aim was to move away from the dependence of personal relationships between employers and schools and make the process more systemic, working to bring commonality of thinking and support together.	
3.0	Overview of employer engagement, EA network and virtual work experience provision within Swindon and Wiltshire	
	Item 3.0 would be divided between AB, presenting a national overview, and ST, presenting a Swindon & Wiltshire overview. National Overview The presentation given by AB can be accessed using the link below. https://static.swlep.co.uk/swlep/docs/default-source/sub-groups/skills-talent/national-update-spring-term-2021.pdf?sfvrsn=c207b41f_4 The presentation covered the following key areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills for Jobs White Paper • Businesses backing Social Mobility 2021 • Enterprise Adviser Campaign • Upcoming projects 	



	<p>These were very live issues to maintain on the agenda. The Skills White Paper would go through a long consultation period before it became an Act.</p> <p>Swindon & Wiltshire overview The presentation given by ST can be accessed using the link below.</p> <p>https://static.swlep.co.uk/swlep/docs/default-source/sub-groups/skills-talent/careers-hub-presentation-feb-21.pdf?sfvrsn=66f1246b_4</p> <p>Across the country Careers Hubs had hit difficulties in reaching their targets because of Covid-19. No Careers Hubs had improved their figures during this period.</p> <p>Speakers for Schools had attended the Career Leader virtual meeting on 10 February. 28 schools had already signed up to undertake a virtual version of Speakers for Schools, but after the meeting it was believed more would commit. As this was a national offer, it may be difficult for students to secure their places.</p> <p>Senior Leadership Teams in some schools wanted to push work experience back to the end of July, so students could make up for lost time on schoolwork over this period.</p> <p>LS added that Malmesbury's students had been told to do as much as they could during lockdown and the school was looking to offer sessions over half term and Easter holidays. The school was also not discounting work experience during the Summer holidays.</p> <p>There was a need to remain flexible in these exceptional circumstances and conditions.</p>	
4.0	Wessex Water: taking a virtual approach: an example in action	
	<p>BT presented to the meeting on Wessex Water's move to the virtual world to deliver apprenticeships and work placements as a result of the pandemic. The presentation can be accessed by using the following link.</p> <p>https://static.swlep.co.uk/swlep/docs/default-source/sub-groups/skills-talent/wessex-water-virtual-interaction-and-engagement.pdf?sfvrsn=d04df734_4</p> <p>Although Wessex Water was headquartered within the West of England LEP area, it also covered large swaths of Wiltshire.</p> <p>Apprenticeships Wessex Water had 100 vacancies for apprenticeships. Previously, assessing students for apprenticeships had taken place in large assessment centres. This</p>	



	<p>was now being carried out virtually and the presentation referred to the stepped approach.</p> <p>Wessex Water had signed up to the Government’s Social Mobility Pledge. As such, it tailored the use of language used in the assessments and was aware of the prevalence of digital poverty.</p> <p>Work Experience</p> <p>EJ presented to the meeting on the use of technology for virtual work experience with Wessex Water. The programme was set up so that both students and parents could access at any time. (See link to the presentation above.)</p> <p>Wessex Water wanted to make both virtual apprenticeships and placements impactful and meaningful for participants. It was keen to provide good programmes and had approached its Board for an appropriate budget to carry out the programmes successfully. A briefing document had been prepared for the Executive Leadership Team which set out the steps for a meaningful, practical engagement; it was no longer just about careers fairs. Employees may want to offer their support, but because of the way their work was structured, they were unable to commit a full day to the programmes. For this reason, it tended to be higher management who attended, and they were not necessarily the right fit for the young people involved. Employees were currently given one paid day per year to volunteer. Eight hours per year was a different way to view this and would be more appropriate to the modular approach.</p> <p>PB thanked BT and EJ on their presentations and for sharing Wessex Water’s approach to virtual apprenticeships and work placements. SWLEP was looking forward to seeing the implementation and results of operating in this way.</p>	
<p>5.0</p>	<p>Employer examples of virtual work experience activities available or in development</p>	
	<p>RS commented that there was a need to stress to managers what they would achieve from the experience, as they were able to offer more students the opportunity in the virtual world which would increase the talent pipeline.</p> <p>AB cited the example of Wilmot Dixon which was operating a modular format. The schedule was issued to schools with the schools selecting their own programme. Appointed Wilmot Dixon employees were attached to each module, so staff knew their schedule in advance.</p> <p>Other examples cited were Babcock and Airbus, which attracted 2,500 people in its virtual programme over a two-week period.</p> <p>There were good virtual practices coming forward which would be included in the new guide to employers.</p>	



6.0	The needs of the schools/colleges in terms of virtual work experience	
	<p>LS spoke to the meeting. The legacy from 2020, was that last year's Year 10s did not go out on work experience, as it was due to happen right at lockdown. The current Year 11s therefore had not experienced the world of work. This year was going to be a struggle. The focus would be on Years 10 and 12, but there would also be a need to prioritise certain individuals in Years 11 and 13 who did not have clear career paths.</p> <p>Other key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speakers for Schools had been the first route and was very successful with a good take-up; • the school was still hoping to be able to get students OUT for a day sometime this school year; • local providers were producing videos for the virtual offer and the STEM element was strong; but • there was a gap in the agricultural sector. The school was in a semi-rural location with lots of students hoping for that line of work. This needed to be investigated. <p>ST advised that approximately 14,000 placements were needed across Swindon and Wiltshire in one year from Year 10 to Year 13. There should be multiple opportunities to do a virtual work experience element from Year 8 upwards, so when students reached Year 10 and Year 12 work shadowing would be a focused activity. Students would be competing to secure their places. A significant increase in the level of engagement was required. The Hub was looking at providing a bank of video work, but the requirement from Gatsby was that these need to be interactive. The activity provided would then be marked and fed back to employer.</p> <p>RS commented on the interaction with the HE sector. The Health & Life Science sector must reach students at Year 7. Year 10 was too late for this sector, as the students may have chosen the wrong options by that point. It was felt they needed to be engaged much sooner.</p> <p>The technology of virtual work placements did have cost implications. The platforms had to be paid for and were provided up to a headcount-based limit. Any additional students would incur extra cost per head. There were therefore pressures on funding. ST commented that schools did have budgets and had always provided work experience.</p> <p>The Careers Hub needed to resolve the issue about funding and capacity, otherwise we would be failing. LS added that schools do have catch-up funding available from the Government and additional funds for the most vulnerable. £100,000 was available at her school, some of which could be used for work experience.</p>	



7.0	Next steps discussion: how can the members develop a Swindon and Wiltshire offer and share good practice with own networks? Cornerstone Employer action plan – development: next steps	
	<p>The next step would be to draft an Action Plan that could be implemented. More employers needed to understand virtual work experience. The Cornerstone Employer Group could be promoting this across the area for employers to build their own programmes using simple examples of activity which were successful. SH was working with a lot of projects locally and aiming to recruit employers during half term. The Group in Birmingham ran an event for other employers to attract interest. Putting Cornerstone Employer Groups to the fore would have more impact on other employers.</p> <p>A small Working Group was needed to develop the Action Plan so there was a tangible product to work towards. The Working Group to include PB, RS, LS and SH.</p> <p>Action: establish date for Working Group to meet.</p> <p>PB thanked the Cornerstone Employer Group attendees for their input and contributions. He explained that the meeting would be moving into the usual Steering Group but extended an invitation to the Cornerstone Employer Group to join if so wished.</p>	Mar 2021
Steering Group meeting only		
8.0	Review of minutes and actions from 10 December 2020	
8.1	Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2020 were read and approved.	
8.2	<p>Matters arising transferred to Action Log.</p> <p>The updated Action Log from the meeting on 10 December 2020 was reviewed.</p> <p>All items were on agenda for discussion or completed.</p>	
9.0	<p>Workplan/Implementation Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus on progress to date • Compass updates 	
	<p>ST spoke to the papers. Key points raised were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark 1 (<i>A stable careers programme</i>) figures were continuing to fall • Information received from CEC, was that DfE was currently looking at Benchmarks 5 (<i>Encounters with employers and employees</i>) and 6 (<i>Experiences of workplaces</i>) given the impact of Covid and targets may be adjusted mid-year accordingly; 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark 5 had fallen since September but had started to increase again in January; • Benchmark 6 was moving upward; • Benchmarks 3 (<i>Addressing the needs of each pupil</i>) and 7 (<i>Encounters with further and higher education</i>) were RAG rated RED; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark 3 would mean sharing student data and the schools did not have the capacity with students learning at home; and • Benchmark 7 because some Careers Leaders did not record activity with FE as they felt it was not good enough. Background action was in place to rectify; • Benchmark 8 (<i>Personal guidance</i>) had shown a significant increase, bringing it up to the national average. Virtual technology had proved much better for this. <p>ST referred to the Work Plan and the key points raised were at AMBER RAG-rating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EA recruitment ongoing as there were vacancies; • bursaries to be provided to new institutions against Benchmark 1. Most of these were SEND; • upgrading schools to Compass Plus ongoing; and • EA/EC team to work with schools to achieve transition. <p>PB stated that he had concerns about how SEND schools might be able to manage work experience for their students in current conditions. Employment prospects for SEND students in Swindon and Wiltshire were below the national average. SH added that there was some under-reporting within Wiltshire Council with young people into employment but agreed that the numbers were still low. SEND schools and colleges would like to get students out on work placement, so employer engagement was key. Although there were lockdown restrictions at the moment, moving to virtual was being accessed as a viable option. It would still have to be carried out in a school setting and during term time. The question was raised as to whether virtual work experience would offer the solution for SEND students and whether they would need a different approach. A blended approach of face-to-face and virtual placements was the way forward for the future. This should be reflected in the Action Plan.</p> <p>The Careers Hub was building a bank of employers between now and the start of the new school year. Schools would deliver the training to employers to try to break down the barriers.</p>	
10.0	BM 8 Personal Guidance Briefing Paper	
	ST spoke to the paper. In order to give careers advice for a 1:1 guidance interview for students at age 16 and at 18 years, a member of staff was required	



	<p>to be Level 6 qualified. When we had previously looked at this subject, only 36% of schools had been covered. Now this figure was at 63%.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven institutions (three mainstream and four SEND schools) had recorded no achievement in terms of personal guidance, at 10.87% this was below the national average. The Deanery was a new school which only currently had Years 7 & 8, so this feedback was understandable. • The biggest barrier to recruitment of Careers Advisors was salary scale. • Careers Advisors were asked to undergo professional training over two years, but the average salary of £24,000 did not reflect this level of commitment. <p>LS repeated the experience Malmesbury School had regarding the appointment of a Careers Advisor being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having to increase the financial offer; • offering flexi time; and • an offer to train. <p>PB asked whether a type of peripatetic model would work for this provision. LS added that Malmesbury's Careers Advisors could be outsourced across schools in its Trust.</p> <p>Where possible a 'call to action' regarding providing every student in Swindon and Wiltshire with access to personal guidance interviews, needs to be reinforced by local authority teams and the Careers Hub with Headteachers, Governing Bodies and SLTs. This is a focus for the Careers Hub action plan.</p>	
11.0	AOB	
	<p>PB advised of a meeting with James Darley from Transform Society.</p> <p>https://transformsociety.org.</p> <p>He had established Teach First and the Teach First model was now being applied to various sectors, such as Police, social work, mental health and prison staffing to train graduates and ensure they had experience of challenging public sector roles as part of their career development. Not enough public sector was represented within Enterprise Advisors or the Cornerstone Employer group.</p> <p>Action: to set meeting with ST, MT and SB.</p> <p>Action: to invite James Darley into the next Steering Group meeting in May.</p>	<p>March 2021</p> <p>May 2021</p>
	<p>Next Meeting: Thursday, 13 May 2021 - 1pm – 3pm</p> <p>Future Meeting dates for 2021: Thursday, 8 July 2021 – 10am – 12 noon</p>	



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	Thursday, 16 September 2021 – 10.30am – 12.30pm	
	Thursday, 9 December 2021 – 2pm-4pm	
	Meeting closed at 12.07pm	

Paddy Bradley

13 May 2021