

First Step Croydon

“How can Croydon develop a high quality education to employment brokerage and support service?”

A Local Action Mini Review - Councillor Jamie Audsley working with Croydon Citizens

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Executive Summary

Background Concerned about the problem of our young not being able to find high quality work experiences Councillor Jamie Audsley has been working with Croydon Citizens to develop First Step Croydon, the campaign for quality work experiences and employability opportunities. This “Local Action Mini Review” asks how Croydon can develop a high quality education to employment brokerage and support service (EEBSS) to address this problem in the long term.

Situation Croydon has significant employment opportunities on the way but is also facing the challenge of developing a sufficiently skilled work force . While the borough has pockets of excellence, support to develop employability for our young is currently weak in many places with support for work experience and careers being areas of particular concern.

Approach The review interviewed representatives from relevant stakeholders across the borough.

Recommendations have been identified to support each key stakeholder group: schools and colleges; young people; organisations in the landscape and employers to develop a high quality EEBSS. From this the First Step Croydon campaign has developed four overarching goals.

First Step Croydon’s Goals in 2015

- 1) To work with Cllrs Letts and Flemming to scope and develop a high quality education to employment brokerage and employability support service as part of the proposed job brokerage, ensuring young people in schools and colleges are ready for work
- 2) To work with Cllr Alison Butler, to create a “youth leadership team” that joins the Croydon Promise Delivery Board to hold future service developments to account
- 3) To work with Croydon Council to further improve provision of high quality work experience for the town’s young people, especially in growth sectors such as: health; science and technology; construction
- 4) To work with Croydon Council to expand First Step Croydon into a campaign that enables the town to achieve its collective goal of ensuring our young people are ready for work to include: defining “Croydon’s Work Readiness Commitment”; defining and awarding “Recognition” of being work ready; “Annual celebration” of best practice awards event and a First Step Croydon e-newsletter

Background to the review

Since first being elected as a Croydon Councillor in 2014 many young people have told me about their hopes and fears for the future. They are excited about the big developments and changes improving our town but also worried that local young people may miss out. It emerged that the concern for many was the worry about being able to successfully navigate the journey from education to work. The problem of not being able to find high quality work experience came up again and again. Without appropriate experience of the world of work, too many of our young people are sadly finding themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of being rejected for interviews and jobs. With our young people's livelihoods and our town's prosperity at stake we need our schools, colleges, employers and Council to continue to work together to raise standards at all levels to ensure getting ready for the world of work is no longer seen as a tick box process and all our young are equipped with the skills to enter the labour market.

I have been working to address this situation in in two ways: firstly by supporting the development of the First Step Croydon campaign for work experiences and employability opportunities which during 2014 has seen young people, educators, business leaders and Council work together to improve the supply of high quality work experiences across the town. Secondly, I agreed to work with young leaders from Croydon Citizens to investigate how we could develop long term solutions to the problems they are facing. The problem as we see it is that in the rapidly changing education, skills and employment landscape, there is no clearly defined service, or set of services our young people can go to. While we recognise there are many providers working hard in this area - our young people are demanding more. We therefore posed the key question for this review: **“How can Croydon develop a high quality education to employment brokerage and support service (EEBSS) for young people and employers?”**

My great thanks to all those who have contributed to this review and to the many who work tirelessly across our town to ensure our young people are ready and excited to step into the world of work. I hope this work contributes to improving that journey.

Councillor Jamie Audsley, March 2015

The situation Croydon faces...national context

While things have been improving recently with a decline in youth unemployment during 2014, getting a job is still a major concern for many young people (ONS, 2014). This won't come as a surprise to any of us. In recent decades the transition from education to work has become increasingly complicated and hard to navigate, with students finding it harder to see a connection between study and the world of work. Labour markets are requiring higher levels of skill and education beyond school. The result? Nationally, youth unemployment has been more than three times higher than adult unemployment for over a decade, confirming the existence of structural barriers that are obstructing young people from finding and sustaining jobs, and progressing their careers (UKCES, 2014).

At the same time as our young people are worried, so too are our employers. The Employer Skills Survey 2013, from the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, found that skills vacancies in England had nearly doubled since 2009, from 63,100 to 124,800, while recent papers from the CBI and the British Chambers of Commerce insist that young people lack the skills they need for work (BCC, 2014; CBI, 2014)

So what's at the heart of this situation? A lack of experience is the number one reason why recruiting employers turn young job applicants away. It's also the main reason they find them poorly prepared for work (UKCES, 2013). Young people are well aware of this situation and are demanding greater access to the workplace during their education to ensure they gain the skills and experience that employers want to see.

While there has been much effort to reform our education and skills system in recent years (see appendix 1 for timeline of recent history) to address the situation there are still great challenges. OFSTED's recent review of the implementation of 16 to 19 study programmes found that education "providers weren't using work experience effectively" and "too much careers guidance about the full range of options available to young people...was weak." (OFSTED, 2014). There's also of course the need for employers to do more too much more too, with a recent UKCES report (UKCES, 2014) calling for "urgent action" on behalf of employers to improve skill levels in order to boost productivity, wages and social mobility.

With the continuing drive to devolve (Heseltine, 2012) Croydon now has the opportunity to play a greater role in shaping its own future in terms of skills provision. But what should this effort look like? In reviewing what makes an effective school-to-work system, Schwartz (2012) identified a number of key features including :

- 1) Investment in coherent careers information, advising and exposure programmes
- 2) Deep and sustained engagement of employers, facilitated by a relevant intermediary or “broker”

From this basis the review therefore poses its key question: **“How can Croydon develop a high quality EEBS for young people and employers?”**

Note: for a detailed review of best practice around vocational and employability learning see appendix 2

The situation Croydon faces...the local context

Employment opportunities are on the way...

Croydon is set to benefit from major opportunities for employment growth over the next five years and beyond. These include: the creation of jobs through the delivery of the new Westfield Hammerson development, predicted growth in SMEs and the growth and of Gatwick Airport. By 2020 this is could see the possible creation of 16,000 new jobs for the town (Croydon Promise, 2014).

Developing a skilled workforce is however a significant challenge...

The Croydon Council Cabinet report of 15th December 2014 acknowledges that work needs to be done to skill up more local residents to take up higher level jobs. It will therefore take a coordinated effort from young people, schools; colleges; training providers; employers and the public and community sectors to ensure that the opportunities coming to Croydon are taken up by appropriately trained and skilled applicants from the borough. Challenges for key stakeholders are set out next.

Challenges facing our educators and our young people ...

While **excellent practice to develop employability is happening in some schools but not widespread across the borough** . The 15th December report to Council on 'Employability, jobs and skills: local jobs for local people' states that there are borough-wide weaknesses in terms of an insufficient employability focus in the curriculum of schools'. Three key causes were identified during the review. Firstly schools are teaching the national curriculum and the appropriate examined qualifications as required by the Department for Education and Ofsted. As a result there is little specific requirement for an employability focus other than the development of important skills such as literacy and numeracy and schools are largely focusing on attaining good examination results on which they will be judged by OFSTED and in the school league tables. These are of course also important in assisting the young people to get jobs. Secondly rapid changes to service responsibilities and provision have happened in recent years. Lastly the cost of organising work experience and the removal of an obligation to offer work related learning after the Wolf Review has caused the number of schools offering work experience to fall.

Prior to the start of the review young people raised **work experience** as a particular concern. Focus groups held during the review heard that the responsibility to find some form of work experience usually falls on young people themselves, many of whom do not know what type of work experience to go for and how to go about making the necessary arrangements. Participants in focus groups also agreed that their schools would only help them find work experience if they could not find any themselves, in which case the choice of placement could be somewhat restricted and the opportunity to gain useful insights might be lost.

In addition, findings obtained from a focus group with young people in the Youth Council shows that **many find it difficult to negotiate the numerous and complex information channels** through which they can obtain information on training or employment. Currently relevant links are not well enough sign-posted from a well known, accessible and trusted service and young people do not feel they have enough support to navigate the complexity they experience.

The **largest number of unemployed young people in Croydon are in the 18/19 - 24 age group**. This suggests that while the young people are largely progressing into post-16 education and training, they succeed less well in the transition from college to work or higher education. Unemployment levels may be due in part to the above-mentioned difficulties voiced by young people in negotiating the complex information channels through which employment or training can be found. In addition, many larger employers ask applicants to entry-level jobs to complete extensive online applications. Parents, carers, careers professionals and employers report that **many of the young people applying for these jobs do not have the skills or experience to complete the applications successfully**.

How employers recruit is also a serious challenge for many of our young people. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make up the vast majority of employers in Croydon. Research shows that most of these employers find new employees through informal recruitment practices such as word of mouth. This **disadvantages young people who do not have effective networks** from which to obtain information, guidance and contacts to obtain both work experience and work opportunities. Employers are also expecting applicants to have experience of work, however this has become more and more difficult with only 19% of employers in London offering work experience. In addition part time work, a good source of work experience, has become more difficult to attain; research show that the proportion of young people who are in part time work and education has halved in the past 15 years (UKCES, 2015, Catch 16-24).

Challenges our employers face ...

- Tight finances and lack of capacity limiting investment in recruitment and training for new employees
- Needing job ready recruits to hit the ground straight away with high productivity, enthusiasm and dedication
- Many poor quality applications; many applicants' lack of awareness of the requirements of the work environment
- Looking for interpersonal skills usually developed in the world of work over a long period of time
- Unwilling to change recruitment practices as do not have the time to experiment
- At times, bad experience of employing unsuitable candidates – losing money, customers, public confidence
- Complicated financial offer from Government to encourage them to recruit young people, e.g. Apprentices
- Being approached by too many different organisations wanting opportunities
- The complexity and administrative burden of organising and preparing for work experiences

The challenge of a complex and highly fragmented landscape....

Work Experience brokerages for school pupils:

- Capital South (Education Business Partnerships)
- A growing number of school and college run approaches to brokerages and employability events

Volunteering opportunities:

- CVA volunteering brokerage
- School based brokerages
- Local voluntary sector e.g. Neighbourhood Care Association
- BBC, Mott MacDonald, etc.
- Informal volunteering arrangements

Additional Support:

- Pre-employment preparation
- Mentoring and other support (organisations such as Lives Not Knives, Mighty Men of Valour, Cyrus Consultancy, etc.)
- Faith and BME Voluntary groups

Support from National Bodies:

- National Careers Service (Prospects and Inspiration Agenda)
- National Apprenticeship Scheme
- Business in the Community
- Teach First

Support from local agencies:

- CALAT and Learning Curves
- Croydon JobCentre Plus
- Council's School Improvement Team (support for schools)

Business Networks:

- Croydon Chamber of Commerce
- Federation of Small Businesses
- The Croydon Partnership
- Local trade associations

Campaigns: Croydon Citizens; Croydon Education and Skills Board

What resources are available to address the challenges?

How can these support First Step Croydon's 4 goals in 2015?

Capital South (Education Business Partnership)

- Currently organise 2981 placements for pupils in Key Stage 4, down from 4139 in 2011-2012
- Cost approximately £50 per placement
- Businesses offering work experience placements are visited to ensure they offer a safe environment for the young person.
- The placements are managed through well-developed computer systems.
- This will become part of Octovo (the new education mutual) to be launched in April 2015.

Capital South also offer mock interviews (a traded service) and the “EU Passport”. The “EU Passport” is an EU funded project involving an online CV builder which allows the young people to build up accredited work experience by relevant employers (this could be further developed to support the recognition element of **First Step Croydon's Goal 4**). The project also includes mentoring and teacher training in order to improve the teachers' ability to teach work readiness.

Post-16 providers (schools and colleges) have funding and responsibilities for supporting employability and many have their own organisation-based systems. While many raise concerns about challenging budgets, better co-ordination of these resources for the common good of all our young is a key factor and provides opportunity to support **First Step Croydon's Goal 1**.

There are opportunities to put forward bids for **European Structural Investment Funds** for the period from 2014 to 2020 to develop programmes of basic skills, apprenticeships, STEM subjects and higher education, careers advice and guidance, employer engagement and brokerage, and support to local SMEs. This could provide the opportunity to support **First Step Croydon's Goal 1**.

Proposals have been drawn up to establish an online **5-18 Croydon Work Readiness Commitment** for the borough providing a framework for of the borough's schools and colleges to deliver a programme of preparation for work and career choices. A range of partners will be asked to contribute projects and opportunities to enable this commitment to be realised. This could support **First Step Croydon's Goal 4** to develop a campaign that supports the town achieve its collective goal of ensuring our young people are ready for work.

A central jobs brokerage. Plans are in place to develop a central jobs brokerage service. The service will work with employers to develop job opportunities which need to be filled and aim to provide employers 3 job-ready applicants for every vacancy created across the borough. Unemployed and underemployed residents would come to the broker which would be funded in part by Westfield and Hammerson. There may be opportunities room to add other elements to this service to improve employability e.g. careers advice, work experience or internships, etc. The Pathways to Employment scheme set out in the 15 December report to Cabinet includes **proposals for employability support to all young people should be provided through the new job brokerage service.** The resources already allocated in the Council for the employment brokerage programme could be also adapted to cater for the 16-24 age group and support **First Step Croydon's Goal 1.**

The Croydon Promise Delivery Board is being set up to ensure that Croydon delivers on its promise to bring growth to the borough. The board will oversee the 10 key areas of growth outlined in the recently published Croydon Promise. This resource provides the opportunity to hold the development of services to support employability to account and support **First Step Croydon's Goals 2 and 3.**

In addition, **a large number of organisations make a contribution to employability in the borough**, from recruitment to apprenticeship and work experience schemes, volunteering, mentoring, etc. These include CALAT's Learning Curves, voluntary organisations such as Lives Not Knives , Play Place and Changing Paths, the Crystal Palace Study Centre, and CVA, through its volunteering brokerage, to name but a few. Work to co-ordinate relevant organisations to identify resource and align resource that can be built into the development any EEBSS would support **First Step Croydon's Goal 1.**

Review goals

The review interviewed a number of stakeholders, focussing their responses to answer the questions below. Combining answers from different stakeholders enables us to answer our **key question**, “**How can Croydon develop a high quality EEBSS for young people and employers?**”

Supporting Schools and Colleges

- What kind of education to employment brokerage and support service do schools and colleges need?

Supporting Students and Young People

- What do students and young people in Croydon (schools, colleges and those not in formal education) want and need from an education to employment brokerage and support service?

Supporting Organisations Working in the Landscape

- How could plans for a central education to employment brokerage and support service best support relevant organisations in the landscape? E.g. Capital South; JCP; CALAT

Supporting Employers

- What kind of education to employment brokerage and support service do employers need?

The analysis of the answers to these questions forms the majority of this report.

Project approach

Research methodology

Evidence has been gathered through desk research and interviews with representatives from stakeholders across the borough. The interviews focussed on the project goals in order to gain information needed to answer the project brief, backed by in-depth probing questions where additional information was available. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed for interviews with educators and employers. In addition focus groups were held with: young people at schools and colleges; Croydon Youth Council; Careers Professionals. Stakeholders included in the research were:

- Young people aged 11-25
- Education orgs (schools and colleges)
- Employers
- Organisations to include:
 - Capital South (Education Business Partnership)
 - Croydon BID
 - Jobcentre Plus
 - CALAT advice and guidance
 - Private sector recruitment agency advice and job search support;
 - Council / GLA funded provision in West Croydon
 - Community & third sector advice and guidance organisations
 - Croydon Commitment - employer CSR body
 - Croydon Citizens – civic alliance

The analysis of the feedback is grouped under the review goals – i.e. *the four sub questions to answer the key question* - and forms the majority of this report. Contact Ilona.Kytomaa@croydon.gov.uk for further primary

Supporting Schools & Colleges

What kind of education to employment brokerage and support service do schools and colleges need?

Education organisations think an education to employment brokerage and support service is a good idea but it has to be developed properly

Croydon Head Teachers Association and College Principals said:

- It's a good idea though the right resource and right players would have to be properly aligned
- There is the opportunity to join things up, though certain institutional self interests will have to be overcome
- We'll need to bring together the key employer infrastructure in the town – Occupier forum, Chamber, BID
- We have the opportunity to pragmatically and thoughtfully build on the services we have, can the proposed jobs brokerage further expand its remit to support this?

Educators told us key features of the service they would want:

- It has to be low cost – many said Capital South's service, the original Education Business Partnership had become too expensive as national funding was withdrawn
- Well staffed so we can get access when we need it
- Employability organisers building relationships between education and employers to save us time
- Enable easier access to high quality work experience placements that students really want
- Enable a collaborative effort to ensure hard to find sectors are involved e.g. quality placements in health; engineering; tech sector
- Integrate careers advice and guidance into the brokerage to include:
 - visits from relevant employers; careers fairs
- Integrate wider youth services
- Organise Joint careers events at key points in the year focused around geographic hubs
- Ensure fairness in the allocation of opportunities
- Create a standardised approach across the town to make this easier for employers – one central approach
- Consider a pragmatic approach, connecting existing brokerages (e.g. Capital South) and proposed jobs brokerage together for improved effectiveness and efficiencies
- Key activities wanted: work experience; work shadowing; careers talks; careers events; coaching and mentoring

Many educators would like a high quality and consistent preparation for work and work experience programme across the borough

Key features of preparation for employment programme wanted are:

- Focus on 16-19 as that's where the government now requires work experience to take place
- Confidence building sessions with employers
- Taster days and shadowing
- Visits from employers into the school
- Mock interviews
- CV development workshops
- Interview practice – competence based questions
- Employer speed dating in central Croydon locations
- Post exam job applications and preparation workshops
- Summer holiday workshops in a central and accessible location
- A summer jobs programme paying Living Wage
- A central walk in centre that is really welcoming to young people and simulates the world of work environment
- Information on how best to engage with businesses to support effective work experience shared among schools and colleges
- A work experience package focusing on providing opportunities for generic skills acquisition
- Recognition for young people by employers for having done work experience and other learning activities
- Celebration and stories of success event run each year
- Networking between classroom teachers and businesses is also needed to help schools make their teaching more relevant to future employability e.g. Teacher work experience CPD programme across borough with relevant employers

Recommendations

1. Explore potential service models that would also enable the proposed Jobs Brokerage Service to meet the key service features schools, colleges and youth providers also desire

In Bradford for example, the council and the chambers of commerce are partnering to create an employer engagement brokerage service and to deliver an enterprise curriculum for schools and colleges. In Oldham, the council's youth guarantee will ensure an employment or training opportunity for every 18 year old by 2015, delivered by aligning the efforts of local employers, job centre, colleges, schools and the voluntary sector.

2. Continue to work with the First Step Croydon campaign in 2015-2016 to further improve provision of high quality work experiences in growth sectors such as: health; science and technology; construction.
3. Develop a campaign with young leaders and educators to raise aspirations and standards in preparing our young people for work. To include: unifying and spreading existing elements of good practice across the town - work readiness commitment; skills passport (Capital South); work experience celebration event (Capital South); resources for workshops and employability trainings that can be used by all.

Supporting Students and Young People

What do students and young people in Croydon want and need from an education to employment brokerage and support service?

High quality work experience is the top priority with young people wanting...

- Greater support for finding and preparing for work experiences – especially specialist areas of work such as health; law; engineering; tech
- An open and accessible directory of work experience opportunities should be available for young people to directly see, rather than this being “hidden” by the “system”
 - some form of online work experience “exchange” where young people can input their post code and area(s) of interest
- A structured programme, with appropriate preparation and employability workshops and mock interviews beforehand to enable them to derive maximum benefits from the placement and put into practice the soft skills needed to make a good start in the workplace
 - a simple checklist to get young people to get the best out of their placements with items such as a discussion with a line manager on the overall work of the section/department/company, discussions with colleagues on their work , observation of the everyday processes in the workplace.
 - how to present themselves in person or in writing in order to succeed in their applications
- The option to secure longer stretches of work experience
- Support in reflecting and evaluating their placement to support the right career choice
- The opportunity to create a commercially viable product through project work such as Young Enterprise
- Volunteering as a complementary or alternative experience to work experience
- A clear two-way relationship between schools and businesses that young people can understand
- All Councillors and Senior Officers to offer work experience placements
- It was also suggested that each secondary school in Croydon should have a designated work experience co-ordinator and that the application process for work experience should be carried out by/ through schools and colleges

- The application process should start by completing and providing an “expression of interest” form to the designated work experience co-ordinator
- A matching up procedure should be set up, which should allocate work experience placements equitably across schools in Croydon
- A campaign to involve ore employers should be targeted to secure a large pool of work placement opportunities

In addition young people want the additional features for the service...

- Talks and discussions with a range of employers to develop their own knowledge and views regarding preferred fields of work and future opportunities
- Networking skills for young people
- Support to bring businesses and schools together so they better understand the challenges young people are facing
- Need for clear signposting of provision
- Need for information on career paths
- Need to talk to people on a number of occasions about their career options and to then reflect on discussions held

Recommendations

1. As part of this work develop a clear and transparent approach to fairly allocating opportunities generated across the town
2. Work with young people to explore the development of the following service features as part of the employability support to be provided through the new job brokerage service:
 - an open and accessible directory of work experience opportunities
 - a structured online preparation programme for young people undertaking work experience enabling them to be properly prepared and benefit from work experience where they are having to self organise and take responsibility for their preparation
 - the integration of employability workshops; mock interviews ; careers talks; support in reflecting and evaluating their placement to support the right career choice
 - the opportunity to create a commercially viable product through project work
 - volunteering as a complementary or alternative experience to work experience
3. Ensure young people are at the heart of creating the “Croydon Work-readiness Commitment” so they understand and are able to hold themselves, their schools and colleges, employers and Council to account in its delivery. Make this recommendation real by: A) Creating a logo/ First Step Croydon “quality mark” that employers would have on their websites to indicate their involvement and link through to explain how to apply for opportunities, when they would occur etc. Education organisations could have a corresponding mark communicating their support for employers and contact details for their employability co-ordinator. B) providing recognition (skills passport). C) celebration for the work they undertake in becoming work ready (celebration event)
4. Each secondary school and College in Croydon should have at least one designated work experience co-ordinator and that the application process for work experience to be carried out by young people themselves

Supporting Organisations Working in the Landscape

How could plans for a central education to employment brokerage and support service best support relevant organisations in the Landscape? E.g. Capital South; JCP; CALAT

Many supporting organisations think it's a good idea as provision is fragmented and there is a need for better co-ordination..

Supporting organisations said it was a good idea in principle as currently provision is often too fragmented and there is a need for better co-ordination of existing resources. Key comments included:

- Employers could benefit from such a hub and there's a good opportunity to develop a single EEBS combining this with the jobs brokerage, work in colleges and developing a high quality service for education organisations in the borough
- The desire for an aspirational approach – high skills, high quality
- We are of course interested to maintain our existing provision
- There's the opportunity to organise a series of central careers events
- There's a need to establish a common brand; language; signposting of all the service elements across the town

They said success is dependent on:

- the level of commitment and realism to the partnership or brokerage
- the understanding that numerous candidates' needs do not fit tidily into a "box" and can be complex
- the willingness of key stakeholders to dedicate resources and time to it
- Using a broker or contractor can lead to costs that schools are unwilling to pay (£50/head). A popular brokerage would be a free or low cost brokerage
- Institutional self interest being overcome and existing services being adapted and appropriately sustained for their existing users

Recommendations

1. Work with key infrastructure organisations to identify resource and practice that can be built into the development any EEBS

Supporting Employers

What kind of education to employment brokerage and support service do employers need?

Employers told us there was a need for such a service and it should contain the following features..

All employer participants involved in the research expressed the view that a well-organised brokerage service of some type would be beneficial to the borough. Views varied on what exactly it might be, but there was a willingness to engage further to determine its main elements.

Key views expressed by employers communicated:

- One centralised service would make employers' lives easier
- We need a service to support us maintain effective relationships with schools and colleges and reduce burden of organising and preparing for work experiences
- Keeping red tape to a minimum
- Make it easy and efficient to contact and work with
- Brokerage must understand the business needs, particularly sector specific ones and not send us unsuitable candidates
- It is helpful for both employer and candidate to understand what the key objectives of the placement are
- A brokerage would need make it easier to understand what working with an SME is like

Recommendations

1. Explore potential service models that would also enable the proposed Jobs Brokerage Service to work with employers to offer education opportunities across the town at the same time
2. Organise a series of business round table events to discuss the proposed EEBSS and identify further key features employers require any pros and cons from their perspective
3. Support schools, colleges and employers understand each others needs to enable effective co-working e.g. in the case of Croydon College, each business which has links with the establishment is given a named “account manager” with whom all communications take place
4. Consider how business rates and other incentives could be used to further encourage employers to contribute educational opportunities to achieve implementation of the “Croydon Work-readiness Commitment” to include:
 - Business rate relief for SME’s
 - Subsidised membership of key trading associations and/or BID’s
 - First Step Croydon newsletter as part of the council backed employability campaign providing exposure and communication of businesses’ work
 - Shared provision of opportunities e.g. large employer and SME’s in their supply chains sharing resources, support, organisation etc. to make provision more achievable
5. Explore possibility of using Croydon’s Contact centre to improve effectiveness of education-to-employer relationships
6. Ensure the Council will be an ‘exemplar employer’ in the provision of employability opportunities and will promote best practice to Croydon employers. To support the spread of best practice the Council should adopt the logo/ First Step Croydon “quality mark” that employers would have on their websites to indicate their involvement in the “Croydon Work-readiness Commitment”

First Step Croydon - Goals for 2015

To take forward the recommendations of this review the First Step Croydon campaign has developed four overarching goals:

- 1) To work with Cllrs Letts and Flemming to scope and develop a high quality employability support service as part of the proposed job brokerage to ensure young people in schools and colleges are ready for work
- 2) To create a “youth leadership team” that joins the Croydon Promise Delivery Board and works with Cllr Alison Butler, the Board’s chair, to hold future service development to account
- 3) To work with Croydon Council to further improve provision of high quality work experience for the town’s young people, especially in growth sectors such as: health; science and technology; construction
- 4) To work with Croydon Council to expand First Step Croydon into a campaign that enables the town to achieve its collective goal of ensuring our young people are ready for work to include: defining “Croydon’s Work Readiness Commitment”; defining and awarding “Recognition” of being work ready ; an “Annual celebration” of best practice awards event and a First Step Croydon e-newsletter

Appendix 1: Key changes in national provision during the current parliament

- Connexions the Government information, advice and support service was ended in 2010
- The duty for schools to provide the responsibility for providing careers advice was given to schools in 2012, though the duty to provide face to face careers advice removed
- The National Careers Service was launched in 2012
- Work-related learning was a statutory duty at KS4. This statutory duty was removed after the publication of the Wolf Report in 2012, and central government funding for work experience came to an end, leaving schools to fund their provision of work experience
- In 2014 a centrally-backed careers and enterprise company to broker relationships between schools and employers has been set up.

Appendix 2: Detailed review of best practice around vocational and employability learning

What do innovative and effective programs around the world have important elements in common? First, *education providers and employers actively step into one another's worlds*. Second, in the best programs, *employers and education providers work with their students early and intensely*. Third *employers commit to hire youth before they are enrolled in a program* to build their skills. (McKinsey, 2012)

- *Start young*: employer engagement is also about breadth and realism of aspirations which relate to identity development
- *Do a lot*: higher volume of interventions especially in run up to decision making points
- *Do different things*: different activities relate to different outcomes
- *Recognise disadvantage*: challenge social reproduction, don't strengthen it
- *Integrate in decision making journey*: from exploration to validation, confirmation and supported progression
- Julian Stanley and Anthony Mann (2014), Understanding Employer Engagement in Education, Theories and Evidence

What learning activities best develop employability?

Developing attributes and skills:

- 60% of young people say that on-the-job training and hands-on learning are the most effective ways to learn the skills for work (McKinsey, 2012; UKCES, 2009). Creating high quality work experiences are therefore vital (UKCES, 2009; EET, 2012)
- Enterprise competitions have been identified by teachers as great for supporting high achievers and the development of problem solving skills (EET, 2012)

Developing careers knowledge and transition skills:

- The school-to-work transition has become increasingly complicated and hard to navigate. Social capital through meeting employers is therefore increasingly vital (Education Employers Taskforce, 2012) as is quality face-to-face careers advice and guidance to enable navigation (Work Foundation, 2012)

What support do the most vulnerable need?

- Coaching, mentoring and sustained one-to-one support (Centre for Economic Inclusion, 2013, London youth, 2012)

How do we join up the gaps learners fall through?

- Personalised support tailored to individual's needs and aptitude; improved assessment of career suitability; collaboration across the complicated systems; employer backed recognition of experiences; data tracking to improve learning; engaging parents (Pearson Internal Research, 2013 and Deloitte/Adecco, 2012)
- All schools should identify a member of the leadership team to be responsible for this area of work and identifying a middle managers to co-ordinate successful work with other key staff (NCEE, 2010)

UKCES (2009) Phase 1. The Employability Challenge

Providers should follow 6 principles to embed employability: Based on real workplace practice; Experiential; Personal; Reflective; Structured and integrated process; strong institutional leadership and resources
In essence, this report contains one simple message: genuine experience of the workplace is vital for young people.

Why sustain and develop an education to employment brokerage?

- Employer engagement is very likely optimised when sitting with impartial CEIAG, joining up careers thinking to expectations about educational outcomes, family expectations and labour markets
- Work experience commonly leads to employment outcomes, but is it designed to?
- Without intervention employer engagement can become an instrument of social reproduction **KEY REASON FOR BROKER**
- Challenge: how to engage at scale through the education system (only 15% of young adults recall 3+ contacts) **KEY REASON FOR BROKER**

Julian Stanley and Anthony Mann (2014), *Understanding Employer Engagement in Education, Theories and Evidence*

Why sustain and develop an education to employment brokerage? *Continued*

“An absolutely critical component of world-class vocational systems is the deep and sustained engagement of employers. In my experience this is best done through sectoral associations (e.g. a regional manufacturers association), not through broad based employer organizations like Chambers of Commerce. In the so-called dual system countries like Germany and Switzerland, these organizations play several key roles: they take the lead in defining the skills and knowledge needed for entry-level employment in their industry; they participate in assessing the degree to which students have mastered those skills at the end of the training period; and most important, they provide paid apprenticeships and the coaching and mentoring to support student learning and development at the workplace.

In countries that do not have strong sectoral associations that can play this role, it is critical to find or develop other types of intermediary organizations that can broker relationships between schools and workplaces and support the participation of medium and small size employers in apprenticeships or other forms of workplace learning. In Australia Group Training companies sometimes serve this function. In Boston and a handful of other US cities regional employment boards do this work. The common element among these types of organizations is that they are employer-facing, with staff that understand the needs and requirements of employers and can take some of the logistical and other burdens off the backs of participating firms. The Boston Private Industry Council (BPIC), for example, has a small team of account managers who work directly with companies to line up paid summer internships and part-time employment opportunities, and a larger number of career specialists who work with Boston’s high schools to recruit and prepare several thousand students annually for these workplace opportunities. Without a well-staffed regional employer-focused organization that is primarily focused on this linking and brokering set of functions, you cannot scale and sustain the workplace learning component that is essential to a high-functioning vocational system.

The key to engaging employers is to persuade them that it is in their long-term economic self-interest, and the interest of their sector, to join forces with the education system to ensure that their industry has a steady flow of well-prepared, fully vetted candidates for entry level employment. In the work I and my colleagues are currently doing through the Pathways to Prosperity Network in eight US states, we have encouraged states to begin by focusing on those sectors where employers are most concerned about the so-called skills mismatch, i.e. where the absence of skilled technicians is a major factor inhibiting growth. In virtually all of our states three sectors where employers are highly motivated to come to the table are health care, information technology, and advanced manufacturing. In these high-demand, high-growth fields, there are thousands of good jobs in the “middle skills” category, jobs with a strong technical underpinning that require some education or training beyond secondary school but not necessarily a university degree. Consequently, we believe it will be easiest to persuade employers in these fields to join with educators in designing vocational pathways into these fields that span years 11 through 13 or 14, culminate in an occupational certificate or Associate’s degree, and provide paid internships and other forms of aligned work-based learning along the way.”

Bob Schwartz (2013), What Makes for Vocational Excellence?

Why sustain and develop an education to employment brokerage? *Continued*

- In 2013 a report from the Local Government Association (LGA) Hidden Talents which highlighted the sheer complexity of education, careers, skills and employment support provision for young people which is of no real benefit to the people the provision is targeted at or the employers seeking to recruit local talent.

The reports key findings included:

- The current offer to young people is awash with different national strategies, age boundaries and requirements. Young people between 13 and 24 years old can receive support from at least eight national organisations, funding 33 different funds and schemes, spanning 13 different age groups and – not including school funding – at a cost of over £15 billion each year.
- This complex picture plays out differently around young people too. For instance a 16 year old with one child studying full time can potentially receive support from 10 schemes, with responsibility spanning five government departments. While an 18 year old not in employment, education and training can receive support from nine schemes, and only two being in common with the 16 year old.
- For decades councils have witnessed schemes scatter provision across their areas, with little scope for local partners to shape, quality assure, or bring together support around individuals, or to connect this support with local jobs. This is crucial at a time when opportunities for young people are squeezed particularly hard. Without it, there is a risk that support will not reach the young people that need it most.

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