

**SOUTH WEST REGIONAL SKILLS PARTNERSHIP
PERFORMANCE MONITORING GROUP**

Action Notes

2 pm Monday 30th June 2008

Present:

LC	Lucy Church	HEFCE
MC	Mark Colton	Jobcentre Plus
CE	Chris Evans	Marchmont/SLIM
PG	Pete Gisborne	LSC
SB	Sarah Beeson (for Jenny Milligan)	GOSW
BN	Ben Neild	Marchmont/SLIM
JN	Jim Neilson	South West RSP/RDA
JW	John Wilkinson	Reports to the CBI on RSP
MW	Michael Woodgate	Skills for Logistics

Note taker:

HT	Hilary Todd	Marchmont/SLIM
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Apologies received from: Brian Humphreys, LSC

1. Introductions

Action

Jim Neilson (JN), Director of the RSP and Skills Director for the RDA, was welcomed to the meeting. An additional representative from the RDA was being sought.

It was agreed that, a representative from either the RDA or Business Link should be invited to join the Group to represent the Business Link perspective.

The Group was reminded that its task was to interpret the data and draw out headline issues for the RSP Board.

2. Minutes of the meeting on 9 January 2008

The minutes were approved and actions had been undertaken.

2.1 *Work by National Cross-Region Research Group:* BN was attending the next meeting on 10 June and would report back.

BN

3. Review of Strategic Indicators

The Group was reminded of the 4 segments of the Performance Monitoring Framework:

- 1 – indicators to measure progress against RSP priorities;
2. –ESF – nothing to report till programmes roll out;
3. – extent to which partners were contributing to overall skills agenda in the region – reporting

depends on when data is available;

4. – strategic indicators – the Healthy Labour Market Review (HLMR) process.

The first HLMR had been undertaken in 2004 with the indicator framework developed by IES and commented upon by leading academics. SLIM had then developed the methodology further. This report had a more developed section on qualifications and skills, incorporating more on the Leitch targets. This had drawn on a methodology from the West Midlands Observatory. For every indicator, an effort had been made to find comparators for the previous year/other regions/national average, and to highlight significant diversity at sub-regional and local level.

PG and his team were thanked for the NESS data which covered skills gap vacancies, and Alison McCaig for the productivity output and business generation information.

The broad conclusion was that the region was doing relatively well against indicators, but with the usual local variances. The changes in the economic climate due to the credit crunch were not yet showing up in the indicators. A separate, more detailed briefing, was being developed by the Business and Economy Module, and would be available for the RSP Board.

Noted and considered very important:

In response to a question from John Wilkinson, Pete Gisborne gave the definition of “working age population” and indicated that it had recently changed to include **all** people of working age whether economically active or not, so catching full-time students, carers, early retirees, people on inactive benefits etc. It made comparison with earlier data very difficult and the effect on the South West needed to be considered. SLIM agreed to look at whether a consistent denominator had been used for the analysis.

CE

Changes to the report:

An amendment in the Executive Summary, Qualifications and Learning, third bullet point down: ‘with no qualifications’ needed to be inserted.

CE

Figure 4.17 – looked unlikely – CE to check with Adam Crews (this has subsequently been checked and amended in the latest version of the report).

CE

P 106 – Leitch Analysis. Further sub-regional analysis would be provided (this has subsequently been provided).

To be highlighted to the Board:

- Although numbers of Level 2 and 3 qualifications were rising, so too were numbers of skills gaps/skills shortage vacancies, perhaps because most Level 2s gained were GCSEs at school while employers wanted vocational qualifications. Diplomas would help to address that but it would take time.

- Another dimension was that Hard-to-fill (HTF) vacancies had fallen in the last report but were now rising again (as a proportion of all vacancies), perhaps as a result of migrants returning home, although data was not robust. There was also a question as to whether there had been upper end loss with older workers retiring and younger people coming in with NVQs. Care would be required in reporting this as the economic climate was changing fast.

- Drop in work-related training – suggests SSC remit of driving up training was not in evidence. However, they were being re-licensed and the emphasis currently was on quality of provision. It would be useful to be able to establish where the pressure points were. Additional analysis was requested on the NESS data to show the sectoral concentration of the skills shortages and links with higher level skills.

Action: PG agreed to make additional data available to SLIM.

PG/SLIM

It was not clear what effect Leadership & Management training had had. Training was still regarded as a cost not an investment.

It was noted that what the report did not cover, because it was outside its frame of reference, was return on investment in training. Information was available on returns to individuals. The Leitch evidence report contained cost/benefit analysis and on gains to productivity on from higher level skills and Skills for Life. It was noted as a good topic for future research and would be reflected in the forthcoming Regional Analysis.

The Sector Operations Group (SOG) was looking at sector-specific data and shortages, which

were outwith the scope of this group.

A question for the Cross-region group to be raised by BN: If 70% of the working population in 2020 was already working now, how many qualifications would need to be delivered to meet the targets in addition to what will happen naturally as people retire and younger people with qualifications come in? Is it being looked at nationally? It was looked at in Leitch but is very complex regionally as it is impossible to say with certainty how many qualified/non-qualified people move in and out of a region at any time.

Action: BN to raise at the Cross-Region Group.

BN

For the Regional Analysis, SLIM would endeavour to look at demographic factors and the region's response to Leitch. Was there likely to be a weighting in the South West because highly qualified people who did not want to be engaged at a higher level were attracted by lifestyle factors?

Leitch – projections would be redone when Working Futures 3 data arrived, hence delay in publishing the HLMR.

CE/BN

CE/BN

It was also agreed to produce plot diagrams to illustrate the inter regional comparisons of the relationship between skills and productivity.

4. RSP Priorities – indicator updates

A range of indicators were used to look at progress against RSP priorities, only some of which were under review in this report where new data was available. BN spoke to the paper previously circulated, indicating most of the new data was HE-related. Most importantly, the growth in volume of L&M nationally was not being reflected in the South West. Although the South West had started from a higher base level, there were declines in some institutions. A further question was whether the decline was being balanced by greater Level 2 supervision and management courses through colleges? Although it was a very narrow measure, and it was hard to get consistent additional data, it was agreed the trend should be referred to the RSP standing group on L&M.

BN

Action: refer the L&M trend data to the L&M Standing Group.

STEM: noted that demand for places was rising but supply side was not responding so quickly. Was there an issue about lack of quality teachers in STEM subjects?

BN/LC

Action: It was agreed it should be highlighted to the Board and LC might wish to investigate the figures further and brief her Board member.

Foundation degrees: numbers were rising but not as fast as last year.

Action: BN to request Frances in JN's office for part-time/full-time split. Foundation Forward also to be contacted for fuller information.

BN

NEETS: good progress year on year was noted. However, it was agreed figures needed careful handling as there were some places with big numbers like Devon because it was a big area, while there were other small areas with high numbers such as Bournemouth. 'Not knowns' should be included as they were almost always NEET.

5. Partner Updates

a. LSC

PG advised that reporting arrangements had changed, so dates will be June/July and December/January. September guarantee – government decided every young person (school leaver at 16 but also 17 year olds) should be guaranteed a place in education or training, which presented difficulties in planning as not all wanted it but still had to be offered choice. NEETS remained a priority. Apprenticeships were high on the agenda, and caught between Leitch's ambitious targets and reality on the ground.

TTG: South West programme was not short of referrals but of conversions into starts on courses monitored by the LSC.

Action: PG to ask Brian Humphreys to supply BN with the national review covering all performance measures. He is writing a summary paper to cover achievements, concerns, priorities and short

PG/BN

performance report. He will highlight the issues for the Board.

b. Jobcentre Plus

MC's report was received.

Highlights: - 200 employers had signed up to local employer partnerships, a large proportion of which were in retail and the public sector.

- Redundancies: the number of employers making redundancies was beginning to rise but more noticeable was the numbers involved in redundancy were growing faster.

Comparisons were being done and analysis by sector also, but so far it was printing and food and drink which were being hit. It could be location and sector specific because of distribution costs. Important to note.

- care sector: there had been a double impact on a sector which struggled to fill vacancies in any case through changes to immigration law and the reverse trend of migrant workers returning home. There were numerous issues including pay rates and the fact that those in the sector move on or upwards. It is not an RDA priority sector but perhaps it should be as the potential impact on the region could be great.

A DWP promotion, *employability for people with disabilities*, was running November-December backed up by a 'how to' workshop 3 December in Bristol.

c. ESF

SB's report was received. It was noted that DWP contracts had been signed and launched so there would be a report next quarter on performance and spend.

d. Business Link

BN reported for Business Link (BL) that they were focusing on intensive assists, not light-touch, which involved sending out staff to talk to people. South West BL had exceeded their targets on market penetration (target for intensive assists: 2%, achieved 3-3.5%), to be reported to the Board.

TTG was discussed as there was no measure of either activity or outcomes.

Action: BN to find out how to obtain TTG broker performance data (Ingrid Purse at the LSC); also what can and cannot be counted.

BN

6. Regional Analysis 2008 (to be reported to January 2009 Board meeting) – discussion on format for the analysis

The contents of the previous Regional Analysis were considered. It was noted that there would be a Single Regional Strategy (SRS) in 2010, the Regional Skills element of which the LSC and RDA had agreed would be built on the work of Regional Analysis and the LSC action plan, worked up by the RSP with SLIM's assistance. It was therefore essential to agree the specification for the new Regional Analysis.

A steering group based on this Group would be needed but with Jackie Vosper and perhaps one or two others from the Sectors in addition to MW invited to join it.

It was agreed the following were required:

- Demand-side data
- BL data although historically there was a difficulty because of the way it was collected and held.
- RDA buy-in, and engagement at business support area level.
- ERDF activity.

Action: CE to talk with BL about the new broker database.

CE

Noted: PG had agreed to allow access to the LSC strategic analysis which would be reflected in regional analysis.

PG

7. Research issues – discussion of any relevant research being commissioned by partners or identifiable research gaps.

CE reported that SLIM was completing the first phase of the STEM supply & demand project. ONS had undertaken some of the analysis. At some point, there would need to be discussion of whether eg it was better to have a small number of pure scientists, or business leaders who did a science A level?

PG reported that some ten projects for last year's research programme were being completed [received from Matt Jago post meeting]:

- **Olympics 2012: Volunteering Potential in Weymouth & Portland**

Synopsis : Could workless people in Weymouth, Portland and the surrounding areas be routed to jobs / target-bearing training through volunteering at the Olympic sailing events?

- **Apprenticeships and Basic Skills in relation to Train to Gain**

Synopsis : What Skills for Life provision exists/could exist within Train to Gain? How many young people of which characteristics are involved in Train to Gain? Why are many on NVQs & not apprenticeships?

- **Plymouth: Supply & Demand of Adult skills**

Synopsis : Is current & planned provision adequate to meet current/future learning needs of local employers/individuals in Plymouth?

- **The likely impact of the mandatory driver Certificate of Professional Competence on the LSC in the South West**

Synopsis : In the context of the September 2009 introduction of the Certificate of Professional Competence for all new LGV drivers, does the supply of trainers meet the demand? Can demand for the CPC be modeled?

- **“A Research Study to Review the Development of Common Application Process in the South West”**

Synopsis : In order to aid development and delivery of the online CAP, the South West LSC is carrying out this research across the 15 Local Authorities [LA] and 4 LSC areas. The research will build on best practice relating to the recently established online area prospectuses, identify any barriers and challenges and make recommendations to facilitate a smooth implementation of the CAP by the LA's in 2010.

- **“An Evaluation of Co-Financing of the 2000-2006 European Social Fund Programme in the South West Region”**

Synopsis : It is intended that this evaluation report will provide the LSC with a summary of the range of work that has been supported by ESF over the last 6 years to inform this strategic review by identifying examples of effective projects so that elements of them may be included in future activity. It will also provide evidence of how ESF has contributed to the LSC's priorities to help demonstrate the potential of such a programme to assist the LSC in the achievement of its future aims and attainment of targets.

- **“Financial Services Market Analysis and Skills Review in the South West”**

Synopsis : This study was commissioned by the South West LSC in conjunction with National Skills Academy for Financial Services so as to better understand the needs and challenges facing financial services employers in the region. The study provides analysis to give a succinct overview of the role of the industry in the region, the drivers of change, skills needs for the workforce of the future and a review of the challenges employers currently face in recruiting and developing the skills of their workforce.

- **September Guarantee**

Synopsis : This study evaluated the delivery of the September Guarantee, monitored progress based on relevant data during Autumn 2007 and Spring 2008 and identified numbers of people who had not taken up or not been offered learning by September 2007 and the reasons for this. Recommendations and an action plan were developed to address any outstanding issues and incorporate areas of best practice.

- **Learner Support – work in progress, will advise when complete**

Synopsis : The south west LSC wishes to build on the knowledge ascertained from national research so that it can better understand Learner Support in the South West. This includes understanding how learner support funds are spent, how many people it affects [what characteristics] and whether it is value for money.

8 **Date of next meeting:** to be set for September

HWT