



AGENDA

SELECT COMMITTEE - STUDENT JOURNEY

Thursday, 23 June, 2011, at 9.45 am

Ask for: **Theresa
Grayell/Gaetano
Romagnuolo**

**Swale 2, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone**

Telephone **(01622) 694277/(01622)
694292**

Tea/Coffee will be available 15 minutes before the start of the meeting in the meeting room

Membership

Mr K Smith (Chairman), Mr M C Dance (Vice-Chairman), Mr A R Chell, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr P J Homewood, Mr R J Lees (Co-optee), Mr S Manion, Mr M J Northey Mrs C J Waters

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

9.45 - 10:30 am Interview with **Anne McNulty**, Education Business Partnership
Kent (1 - 2)

11.00 - Interview with **Paul Barron**, Director, Kent Foundation (3 - 4)
11.45 am

Background Reading for Members (5 - 26)

EXEMPT ITEMS

(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)

At the end of the public session, Members of the Committee should remain in the meeting room for 20 minutes for summing up

Peter Sass
Head of Democratic Services
(01622) 694002

Wednesday, 15 June 2011

This page is intentionally left blank

THE STUDENT JOURNEY SELECT COMMITTEE

Hearing 4

Thursday 23rd June 2011

Witness Guide for Members

Below are suggested themes and questions. They have been provided in advance to the witnesses to allow them to prepare for the types of issues that Members may be interested to explore. All Members are welcome to ask these questions or pose additional ones to the witnesses via the Committee Chairman.

Themes and Questions

Anne McNulty, Executive Director, Education Business Partnership (EBP) Kent

- Please provide an outline of the roles and responsibilities that your post involves, and please provide an overview of the services supplied by Education Business Partnership Kent.
- To what extent, in your view, do learning and skills providers in Kent prepare young people for work?
- To what extent, in your view, do vocational training, apprenticeships and work experience schemes meet local labour market needs and the expectations of growth industries in Kent?
- In your opinion, are additional or different training schemes, courses and qualifications needed to prepare young people for work and to meet employers' labour needs?
- In what ways does EBP Kent actively engage employers in the development of their future workforce, and equip young people with an understanding of personal skills and their future choices?
- Please discuss the effectiveness of current partnerships between local employers, educators and other skills providers in preparing young people for the world of work.
- Please explain the findings of the "Stakeholder Review" EBP recently completed.

- Please discuss the role and impact that local career education and information, advice and guidance have in enabling young people in Kent to make informed choices about their future education and employment.
- Please inform the Select Committee of any policy changes at national level that have relevance in this review and that can impact on the educational and employment opportunities and choices of young people in Kent.
- Are there any other issues, with relevance to the review, which you would like to raise with the Committee?

THE STUDENT JOURNEY SELECT COMMITTEE

Hearing 4

Thursday 23rd June 2011

Witness Guide for Members

Below are suggested themes and questions. They have been provided in advance to the witnesses to allow them to prepare for the types of issues that Members may be interested to explore. All Members are welcome to ask these questions or pose additional ones to the witnesses via the Committee Chairman.

Themes and Questions

Paul Barron, Director, Kent Foundation

- Please introduce yourself and outline the roles and responsibilities that your post involves.
- What is the Kent Foundation and what are its objectives?
- Please provide data in relation to young people and self-employment in Kent.
- What are the barriers and enablers for young people who want to set up their own business in Kent? What are the conclusions of the “EmPOWER” report?
- To what extent, in your view, do learning and skills providers in Kent prepare young people for work?
- To what extent, in your view, do vocational training, apprenticeships and work experience schemes meet local labour market needs and the expectations of growth industries in Kent?
- In your opinion, are additional or different training schemes, courses and qualifications needed to prepare young people for work and to meet employers’ labour needs?
- Please discuss the findings of the “EnCourage” survey, and of the “Making the Journey from Student to Entrepreneur” report.
- Please discuss the effectiveness of current partnerships between local employers, educators and other skills providers in preparing young people for the world of work.

- Please inform the Select Committee of any policy changes at national level that have relevance in this review and that can impact on the educational and employment opportunities and choices of young people in Kent.
- Are there any other issues, with relevance to the review, which you would like to raise with the Committee?

School-leavers and graduates are lacking basic skills, says survey

17 May 2010

Nicola Woolcock, Education Correspondent, The Times

School-leavers and even graduates lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, according to a survey of big employers published today.

More companies are having to provide remedial training to new staff, who cannot write clear instructions, do simple maths, or solve problems.

Even those with degrees are failing to impress: one in seven firms said that graduates' reading and writing skills were inadequate, and one in ten said that they had poor numeracy.

Both graduates and school-leavers were also criticised for their sloppy time-keeping, ignorance of basic customer service and lack of self-discipline.

The report ("Ready to Grow: Business Priorities for Education and Skills" - May 2010) by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) said: "There is understandable frustration among business that they continue having to pick up the pieces to support those who left full-time education with weaknesses in the basic skills they will need in their working lives."

It conducted a survey of senior executives at 694 companies, which between them employ more than 2.4 million people, or one in 12 of the workforce.

Seven in ten companies said that action was needed to improve the employability of school-leavers, and this should be the top education priority of the new Government.

Almost two-thirds of employers said that standards of numeracy and literacy should be tackled.

There were also weaknesses in the "soft skills" of graduates and school-leavers, such as time management or working in a team.

"These personal competencies are not simply 'nice to have' but are a core factor in business success in a competitive market place," the report said.

"General educational standards — including basic skills of literacy and numeracy — have long been concerns for employers.

"Employers' particular concerns over numeracy and literacy inevitably vary but there is broad agreement about how shortcomings in basic skills affect employees' ability to perform everyday tasks.

“They can hinder employees in being able to draw out information effectively from basic texts, compose coherent written communications or work through basic arithmetic and percentages, such as working out a discounted price.”

The report added: “Only half of young people currently leave school having achieved the benchmark of an A* to C grade in English and maths GCSE.

“And although this is the standard for which schools and students should aspire, it is not necessarily an accurate proxy for basic numeracy and literacy.

“But the large number of young people falling well below this measure is perpetuating the basic skills deficit among major sections of the UK workforce.”

The CBI found that 18 per cent of firms had invested in remedial training for workers in literacy and numeracy, up from 15 per cent in 2008.

Its report added: “Employers do not expect schools, colleges and universities to produce ‘job-ready’ young people — they recognise it is their responsibility. But at the very least, young people must enter the labour market literate, numerate and employable.”

Of graduates, the report said that a quarter of companies were dissatisfied with their problem-solving skills and a similar number were unimpressed by their self-management. A fifth said that graduates had limited careers awareness.

Job applications from young people were too often “slapdash, containing spelling mistakes, omissions and errors”.

Half of companies are not confident that they will be able to fill graduate-level posts in the next few years and a third are concerned about finding the right candidates for intermediate jobs [A-level equivalent].

Even though the previous Government strove to increase the number of young people taking science, technology, engineering and maths subjects, firms said that there was still a shortage.

“It is of significant concern that despite lower recruitment and more applicants for each position, over two fifths of employers still struggle to find the Stem talent they need.”

Richard Lambert, director-general of the CBI, said: “As we move further into recovery and businesses plan for growth, the demand for people with high-quality skills and qualifications will intensify.

“In the future people with qualifications in science and maths will be particularly sought after, and firms say it is already hard to find people with the right technical or engineering skills. The new Government must make

encouraging more young people to study science-related subjects a top priority.”

Employers rated business studies and maths A levels highest and sociology and psychology lowest.

Source: The Times

This page is intentionally left blank

Ready to grow: business priorities for education and skills Education and skills survey 2010

Executive summary

Priorities for the new government

A new government takes office at a time of major economic challenges, with a need to achieve reductions in public debt and to secure the recovery. Improving the skills of the workforce will play an important part in that process, by underpinning the competitiveness of UK business.

Employers in our survey are very clear about the outcomes they want from the education and skills system. There is a need to ensure school leavers entering a tough labour market have the underlying skills needed for success in any job – over two thirds (70%) of employers want action to improve the employability skills of school leavers, while 63% want action to raise standards of literacy and numeracy.

Similarly over four-fifths (81%) of employers believe ensuring graduates possess employability skills should be the priority for higher education, followed by 42% of firms who want steps to raise the quantity and quality of STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) graduates. Looking at workforce training, three quarters (75%) of firms believe the focus should be on reducing the bureaucracy associated with government programmes, while almost half (49%) want public funding for the intermediate and higher level skills that will give business a competitive edge.

Investing in skills through the upturn

As the economy begins the climb out of recession, employers are focusing their efforts on strategies to help them lay the foundations for future success. Almost two thirds (64%) of employers rank improving productivity and performance as their main priority for the next three years, with just over half (52%) looking to expand market share. Significantly almost two thirds (63%) of employers see investing in skills as vital to achieving these strategic objectives.

However with trading conditions remaining difficult, the majority (58%) of employers plan to leave training expenditure unchanged at present. In response to the squeeze on available resources, more than two thirds (69%) of employers say they will be seeking more cost-effective routes for delivering training, while 63% are maximising returns on their spend by targeting training more effectively.

Getting the right mix of skills

In an increasingly competitive global market, it is essential firms have the right mix of skills – now and in the future. Employers are particularly concerned by the competencies of low skilled staff with less than half (46%) rating competency levels as good. In addition, firms continue to experience problems with basic skills – 52% are concerned about the literacy and 49% the numeracy of the current workforce.

Looking to the future, employers expect a continued shift towards higher skilled jobs. Business demand for lower level skills is expected to decline (-13%), with employers predicting increased demand for higher skills (+55%) and leadership and management skills (+69%). However despite this increased need, over half of employers (51%) are not confident that they will find enough people to fill high skilled jobs in future.

The importance of employability skills

All employers are looking for young people with strong employability skills, including the ability to solve problems, work in teams, and manage their time effectively. But more needs to be done to address the weaknesses in the soft skills of school/college leavers and graduates.

Over two thirds (68%) of employers are not satisfied with the business and customer awareness of school/college leavers, with 57% unhappy with their time management skills. And while employers are generally more satisfied with the employability of graduates significant problems still remain. Almost half (46%) are dissatisfied with graduates' business and customer awareness, and a quarter are unhappy with graduates' time management (26%) and problem solving skills (24%).

Business has a key role to play in the education system

Employers are actively engaged with education at all levels – almost two thirds (64%) have links with secondary schools and a quarter (25%) with primary. Over half (56%) of employers believe the best thing they can do to prepare young people for the transition from school to working life is to provide opportunities for work experience.

This provides an excellent chance for young people to develop employability skills, although many employers accept they could do better when providing work experience placements. Over a third (37%) of firms felt they provided high quality work placements, but 31% felt they could deliver better outcomes for young people. To improve the quality of work experience for school/college pupils almost half (48%) of employers want greater flexibility to deliver placements outside the traditional two-week block.

Growing strong with science and maths

Science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills are valued by employers across different sectors, with almost three quarters (72%) of firms employing STEM-skilled staff. In particular, STEM skills are vital to areas of future growth and employment including advanced manufacturing and low carbon industries. But skills shortages may hold back progress – 45% of employers are currently having difficulty recruiting STEM-skilled staff, with almost six in ten (59%) of firms expecting difficulty in the next three years.

Urgent action is needed to increase the number of young people studying STEM subjects. Over two thirds (69%) of employers want government to promote science and maths in schools, while half (52%) want to protect funding for STEM at university level. But business recognises it has a role in improving perceptions of science subjects – with 71% believing employers should provide work placements to give young people an insight into STEM careers.

The value of HE-business partnership

Effective partnership between the higher education sector, business and government will be critical to maintaining the economic recovery and developing the UK's international competitiveness in the longer term. Three in ten (30%) jobs currently require degree level skills, with graduates rewarded with an average starting salary of £23,000 for managerial roles. Employability skills are the most important factor for employers (77%) when recruiting graduates. Degree subject remains relevant with a quarter (25%) of graduate jobs requiring a specific degree discipline.

Two thirds (66%) of employers currently have links with universities, with almost half (47%) of firms providing work placements and 40% partnering with universities on research and innovation.

Staying ahead on workforce skills

Employers invest £39 billion per year training their staff and the skills system must work in partnership with employers to increase economically valuable skills. Over half (54%) of employers in our survey are currently involved in apprenticeships but barriers to further employer involvement must be tackled. Almost half (46%) of employers are demanding action to strip out bureaucracy, while 41% want support for larger firms willing to train more apprentices than they need for the benefit of SMEs in their sector.

Our survey found only 30% of the training employers provide to their staff leads to recognised qualifications, with further reform of vocational qualifications essential. While 70% of firms wanted reform to focus on making the content of qualifications more business relevant, the same proportion

welcomed the flexibility to mix and match different qualification units which the new Qualifications and Credit Framework will provide.

The language of business

Language skills are increasingly important in a globalised economy. Linguistic proficiency helps firms to consolidate their relationships with existing overseas trading partners and develop contacts in new markets.

Most employers (65%) are looking for conversational ability – rather than fluency – to help break the ice with customers or suppliers. Businesses looking for language skills are still seeking traditional European languages such as French (49%), but employers are also increasingly looking further afield with increased demand for Mandarin/Cantonese (44%).

The Kent Foundation EmPOWER Report (2009)

Summary

Introduction

The transition from student to full-time member of the “Earning” economy can be a traumatic one at the best of times. For some, and in this one can include anyone of any age and background, self-employment can be either the only option or the fulfilment of an ambition. The difference is fundamentally, life experience.

Young people in school or further education colleges who have aspirations to start their own business immediately after this level of education are rare, but there are many who have “dabbled” through the internet and Ebay where they have discovered the methodology of buying and selling online. That process, and the successes where achieved, act as indicators for larger and more involved longer term possibilities but depend largely on hobbies, pastimes and to some extent family influences. The “Great Idea” is publicly applauded when and where it is seen to happen (often backed by some form of public relations activity), but it is not the common factor in young business. New concepts, new approaches to problems, openings in markets exploited by a young mind are noticed because they are “news” and they are news because they are unusual.

In moving from a cosseted learning environment, ie. school, many find difficulties in settling down especially in terms of day to day unremitting self management. When following the university route many stumble over this phase where the sudden freedoms are distracting but eventually, over the average three year course, most are “employable” in one form or another. The university environment is certainly one that is a hotbed of stimuli that for a few leading to considering starting their own business as a tangible option. Previous research however, has shown that again, for most, the initial impetus takes around five years to manifest itself into actuality.

In looking at the areas where one might find young people with aspirations to start their own businesses, research suggested that for the most part, it was those in specific sectors with tangible skills that could be sold on, that had the greater interest in building their own business. Here there was perhaps a quicker or more immediate return on knowledge gained as well as a tangible product to sell.

In looking at sectors such as IT, creative and media and the trades involving building and engineering, all bring skills with tangible transferable knowledge. Each demonstrate a different aspect in terms of the rationale in wanting to work for themselves. Creatives see that opportunity to “enjoy expressing

themselves” doing their own thing but not necessarily as a route to high value income. Creatives see obvious assets in their abilities to deliver commercial design or artistic products and the trades see opportunities in delivering their physical skills. Interestingly, nearly all have indicated a major gap in their knowledge in terms of the basics of business reality.

Despite the increase in teaching business in secondary education, there is far too much emphasis on the celebrity status and the high profile successes of the few. What is needed are business practitioners, not teachers without business experience, to bring more reality into the classroom - but in a structured manner. This then is where the emphasis has to be put on the support for young people’s businesses, an understanding of the realities of business life, the day to day housekeeping of a business, the company management, salesmanship, finance and its management and dealing with bureaucracy.

How one delivers that knowledge, and what the content is, is the key to supporting these young people in their personal aspirations. This piece of research is specifically aimed at those who have decided to start a business and require support in one form or another.

For the providers of that support, one needs to understand the barriers actual, perceived and removable, faced by those embarking on the business journey. It is important to take on board the basics of trust in someone’s advice coupled with the immensity of the technological age and the emerging methodologies of communication, social networking and access to information which needs to be validated.

A recent survey conducted by Middlesex University looking at perceived problems facing young entrepreneurs highlights regulatory burden as the single greatest barrier for a business start up, it being more significant than start-up finance.

Conclusions

Q: What is required by young people to start up a new business?

A: Fast, bite-sized access to knowledge specific to running a business. A mobile phone or computer communications platform. Real-time and virtual networking opportunities. Access to role models and mentors across all delivery platforms. Access to finance. Understanding of risk management and practical solutions.

It is a fact that there are a vast array of initiatives in all shapes and sizes operating independently from each other, supported by organisations and institutions, schools, business bodies, local and national government. Each has its silo of activity, most set out to achieve very much the same objective, that is, to bring young people into the business world in a profitable and sustainable manner.

Putting this in context and with input from young people themselves one can come to a number of simple conclusions.

Research by the Kent Foundation on the best time to start learning about business and enterprise underpins this input as being most appropriate in secondary education but with a strong emphasis towards sixth form and college. Our research has suggested that greater emphasis should be placed on the delivery of a reality based curriculum. Young people have consistently said that they have some of the academic understanding, especially when taking Business Studies for exam purposes, but all lack the knowledge of the wider picture in particular the hard reality of the challenges facing them in "Life." This includes the understanding of risk taking through practical experience, working as part of a collaborative team with a focus on inter-dependence, critical decision making, understanding (and learning from) the routes to success or failure.

Business is not a "game", it can be enjoyable but it can also be an extreme – in that you can potentially lose either your own or other people's money. Young people need to understand the risks (and rewards) more fully and this is best delivered by those that have direct experience. This has been a common anecdotal feedback from many of the young business people researched.

Typically the process is led by an endeavour to teach an understanding of enterprise as a basis for developing innovative ideas into practical business opportunities. Added to this are the elements of understanding risk taking, and the creation of business oriented plans that indicate an awareness of the basics of running a business.

Work related learning is a critical component in the education process but often does not deliver a satisfactory experience. In discussions with a number of educationalists and business providing work experience, there is an emerging opinion that this whole process needs to be revamped into an on-going process rather than just a week or two at most experience. The value for student and business alike would be far greater in seeing the business process over a longer period and experiencing a variety of situations. This however places a severe burden on the infrastructure that manages the process in particular health and safety checks, and of course, the emphasis is again on the goodwill of business itself.

It is a suggestion that some form of business replication could be created within a school, college or university that would touch upon those students participating. Where this has happened, research indicates that results have been positive. In order to achieve these objectives, schools and colleges bring in outside organisations to deliver enterprise days in a wealth of formats, either through specialist companies or by invitation to visiting businesses people. Schools however seldom have the breadth of understanding of business to fully utilise the value of business input, they are often seen as obligatory days as dictated by government policy.

The key organisations that have played a part in bringing young people to the doorstep – and over – of starting a business are those such as Young Enterprise and more recently Young Chambers. Added to these are organisations drawn from business people themselves.

ACTION: Having identified the disjointed approach currently employed, all organisations concerned could place more effort on a combined approach, bringing together a cohesive partnership between schools and business to offer a mutually valuable and sustainable delivery of services.

Q: What motivates young people to start up a business?

A: The key motivation is a steady input from education and enterprise activities coupled with external influences such as role models from business to demonstrate achievement and success.

Young people who have an understanding of enterprise, risk taking and innovation, together with a personal drive to take these into the business world – are not the norm. Where they succeed they are roundly and rightly applauded but predominantly as a reason to encourage others. Make Your Mark is a key organisation in that respect. The key to motivation is a steady input from education and enterprise activities coupled with external influences such as role models from business that demonstrate achievement and success.

Motivation stems from a number of stimuli, it is how these interact with the individual that creates the drive to “take a chance” and the environment that are in that makes the difference. Motivation might be in the form of learning how to overcome obstacles or it might stem from the anecdotal evidence of a successful entrepreneur. Motivation has no single point of origination.

Q: Do the above correlate?

A: The correlation between young people’s requirements and what they are provided with is varied. In part, mentoring and good role models are available. However, there is insufficient consideration given to the emerging technological advancements.

Much of the input required by young people is delivered in a variety of forms, mostly wholly dependent on the educational establishments they attend and the degree to which enterprise is supported and the methodology of its teaching or demonstration. A basic education in terms of literacy and numeracy is not a barrier to business startup or success as evidence has proven. The delivery of soft and hard skills varies in teaching and delivery.

Previous survey work by the Kent Foundation indicates a preference by students for a greater understanding of the skills such as business planning and financial management at the top of the list followed by marketing and presentation skills.

Many educational establishments have no teachers with any practical business experience to deliver the skills based on practical experience, and for the greater part, students themselves miss the vital point of “salesmanship” as a skill that needs to be developed.

Many schools support students by bringing in business people and establishing enterprise days that set out the parameters for teamwork, innovation, developing ideas etc “under pressure” which is a step towards “reality” which is a fundamental requirement for taking a considered step into business ownership.

There are several national organisations that set up competitions, web sites and activities that may be joined either by educational establishments or individuals. The whole panorama of these opportunities is however disjointed and no one can easily benefit from them all.

Soft skills as a requirement to starting a business, such as risk management , confidence building and team work are delivered to some extent by the educational establishments. There appears generally to be a concerted effort amongst schools to take this across the curriculum. There is however no real measure of their success in terms of those that have started and sustained a business.

Delivery of the requirements as indicated by young people is delivered in a disjointed, disconnected manner. Young Enterprise would appear to best sum up the fundamentals of overall stimulus coupled with a sense of reality in one single deliverable package.

ACTION: Create a methodology that could bring all the deliverers into one concentrated campaign, reachable through one gateway with centralised funding and supporting resources ring-fenced to delivery. Organisations would then be able to determine local needs and draw upon the resources accordingly.

Q: What has been offered in the past, was it successful?

A: A number of organisations have independently generated success within their own delivery formats in terms of helping young people create a business. It is however extremely difficult to quantify from anecdotal research an overall level of success. Organisations such as The Prince's Trust assist in creating real businesses but have varied levels of sustainability. The Kent Foundation supports real businesses but it requires more time to determine levels of long term sustainability.

Young Enterprise has a well established format that takes young people through a comprehensive process of business development, it does however require the support of business mentors (who may not be the most appropriate for the task) and relies on the schools to divert funds to pay for the scheme – which has come under considerable strain recently. Many schools however do not take up Young Enterprise. It is “an addition” not “an integral” part of the learning or self-development process often sold to students as a route to gaining UCAS points being more important than the “business” or “enterprise” experience it can deliver. The Young Enterprise scheme does however provide a very well structured format for students to follow. It brings some valuable levels of reality into the tasks in that students take risks in investing their time and money and are taken along a management path with financial planning and recording leading to a real profit and loss situation. There are however a number of emerging alternatives to this product.

Young Chambers, seeks to motivate and empower young people to engage in business and led by young people themselves. Here again is an excellent principle that can generate some positive results but again over-dependent on external business people and their philanthropic interests and the ability of the school to pay for the scheme.

At the point of entering business, organisations such as The Prince's Trust and UnLtd have their own formats for support. Organisations such as the Kent Foundation are specifically “local” and with a small and basic infrastructure in comparison. Building partnerships with businesses and business organisations is a fundamental route to their success.

Each of these organisations have independently generated success within their own delivery formats in terms of helping young people create a business. It is however extremely difficult to quantify from anecdotal research an overall level of success. Organisations such as The Prince's Trust assist in creating real businesses but have varied levels of sustainability. The Kent Foundation supports real businesses but it requires more time to determine levels of long term sustainability.

Looking at all the organisations we have to conclude that levels of young business startup and survival are not a significant impact in the economy. To deliver a higher level of success would require considerable funding sourced centrally as suggested in the previous section.

Q: What have the outcomes been for young people?

A: The evidence from research indicates that there has been value in many of the initiatives and that young people have benefited in one form or another from either the stimulus of working on an enterprise exercise or from the direct support in starting and running an actual business. The palette of choices has to be broad and much demand is placed upon those delivering that support i.e. Mentors and other individuals together with networking opportunities.

For those that have the spark or can be sparked, all the above is of great value and should be continued but refreshed in up to date context and made both affordable for schools or that the money provided by Government for enterprise should be “ring-fenced”. In turn, Ofsted could play a greater part in the measurement of more clearly defined measurements that highlight this work.

The evidence from research indicates that there has been value in many of the initiatives and that young people have benefited, in one form or another, either from the stimulus of working on an enterprise exercise or from the direct support in starting and running an actual business. No two people have identical requirements therefore the palette of choices has to be broad and much demand is placed upon those delivering that support, i.e. Mentors and other *individuals*. Generally the benefit for young people appears to stem from the latter coupled with networking with other like minded people where problems can be shared and joint events created for trading opportunities. For some, the outcome has been starting a company and entering self-employment. Out of those there are some successes for example in the KAYE group. To assess those that are running through organisations such as the Kent Foundation will require more time allowing them to find footing in the economy. However we look at this, the numbers are small and the current economy will be a major test.

Q: What have the outcomes been for business in Kent?

A: There does not appear to be any *significant* overall impact upon businesses in Kent. There is constant reference to the lack of graduates educated in Kent remaining to work in the county which may also obscure any knowledge of those starting businesses following their education locally.

There does not appear to be any *significant* overall impact upon businesses in Kent. There is constant reference to the lack of graduates educated in Kent remaining to work in the county which may also obscure any knowledge of those starting a business following their education locally.

The creation of KAYE has in itself been an interesting step in recognising the emergence of businesses run by younger people but whether this organisation is a club consisting of people up to a certain age or a real value added tool that no existing organisation could offer has not been evaluated. In the same context there are organisations specifically for ethnic minority groups, women in business, disadvantaged people and older workers into self-employment. Again, the benefits have not been evaluated in this research.

One objective may be to link the work done to support young people with the Kent Backing Business initiative which would at the very least bring all the organisations supporting business to a common table.

ACTION: The value of a single “sector” group should be explored as a route to more effective impact for growth.

Q: Does business support to young people have to be significantly different because of their age and if so how?

A: Students have asked for greater access to “life” experience. Although students and young people have indicated their preference for having a one to one relationship with someone they can trust and who has the experience to assist them, what they need in addition to that is bite sized information directly available to them at their convenience through modern emerging media such as social networking sites accessed by computer or mobile phone.

As young people set off in life, the transition from a supportive educational system into the cut and thrust of commerce can deliver some hard shocks. Business support for younger people needs to be designed to be more of a “nurturing” quality at the outset, having a balance between advice and guidance with a strong element of developing self support disciplines.

Students have asked for greater access to “life” experience and in order to achieve that there should be access to a mentoring process (a critical friend) that can hand hold individuals and fast track experience transfer. Value would be added by older more experienced business people, possibly those who currently run or have run businesses for longer periods. To test ideas and to check reality and approach is always of value to businesses and business people of all ages, none more critically that the younger participant. At this stage what is also perceived to be of value are the services of support organisations such as Business Link who would sponsor training/support groups delivering modules such as in Appendix 4 which are well proven deliverables.

In a fast paced environment with many technological changes, a burdensome and complex bureaucracy, good communications are vital. Broadband connection has become a defacto requirement for much of society. Businesses are increasingly established on the basis that they have the facility and that it has sufficient bandwidth.

Young people for the most part have become attuned to the use of mobile phones and the growing range of applications found on them a fact supported by an article written for the Telegraph by Claudine Beaumont (see main research). The article further reported that a significant percentage of graduates – 27% live out of laptops with 61% saying they could not live without their (communication) gadgets. Electronic networking and delivery of information is being taken on by universities such as Cardiff and Sheffield, and Google has adapted its Apps platform specifically for the educational market. Even iTunes has a dedicated section with iTunes U where students can find lectures and associated support material from many of the top universities.

ACTION: Business support organisations and education establishments should consider how young people can access useful and appropriate information through modern technology.

Although students and young people have indicated their preference for having a one to one relationship with someone they can trust and has the experience to assist them through the pains of business growth, what they need in addition to that is bite sized information directly available to them on demand at their convenience. This therefore suggests that a facility to provide this is a required step in their support, designed and aimed specifically for younger people.

ACTION: Business support organisations and education establishments should investigate methodology for delivering individual requests for information and access to data via mobile phones and computers.

In continuing this technological thread, the value of networking is a major factor in delivering a supportive community. The social gathering of like minded people is more valued by those researched but there is a strong emphasis on the use of networking sites designed specifically for young business people with access to their contemporaries and supporting material from a broader range of sources brought together in one portal. Just as with the creation of the Young Entrepreneurs Academy sponsored by Peter Jones (of Dragons" fame) the establishment of an academy for young business people in the County might be considered.

There is for example a Young Entrepreneur"s Academy to be found on Facebook with additional links on Youtube. Based in New York, this indicates the potential value of such a site and also for the process by which young people engage (Facebook is accessible on many mobile phones for continual ease of use, ideal for adhoc access on demand).

ACTION: Provide a safe, secure, supported space for young people to explore, learn, network and trade thereby building up both confidence and a track record.

Q: What actions are required to improve the situation?

A: A different approach to work experience, spreading this over a full year. Establishing a Mentor/Business Angel role, putting young people into business handheld by a Mentor. Creating a Youth Business Bank/funding scheme. Undertake a sector focussed pilot (e.g. creative and media) to explore new ideas of support and communications.

In the period between nurtured education and young adulthood, the mantle of pure education is jettisoned and self management becomes the reality. It is here that mixing with those in a closer age who have been through the pains of establishing a business would be of greatest value. In Kent there is the Kent Association of Young Entrepreneurs who could provide the ideal role models.

ACTION: There are various delivery models in existence, therefore consideration should be given to greater collaboration and perhaps conformity in scope, quality and access with built in flexibility to cope with an extremely variable target audience.

A key hand holding task concerns finance. In the context of young people entering business this is much more of a barrier than for their elders attempting the same, who in the current economic climate are very hard pressed. What young people need are simple practical solutions to creating business plans and proposals that will generate confidence to the lender whether family, a bank or other individual or institution. Here the Kent Foundation has a support process that delivers the first steps, but just as with established businesses there is a need to see this extended to carry the business through the varying cash flow stresses.

ACTION: The Kent Foundation may need to consider reverting back to a policy of making loans especially in the current economic climate. Business is seeking new ways of funding, there is a growing interest in new banking sources such as Credit Unions.

ACTION: Investigate the potential of a Youth Bank as part of this process rather than rely on funding purely from the Local Authority. With leadership introduced by the Authority, consideration might be given to the exploration of the concept of banks collaborating to establish a specific fund for the youth sector and deliver a more rounded “social solution” rather than a hard commercial one.

Looking more closely at the types of businesses that may be started by young people and the specific knowledge required to undertake them leads us to a more sectorally focussed approach. In particular, the creative sector, where there is a relatively easy transfer of skills into services or products for others (a point highlighted in previous Kent Foundation research EnCourage). In this situation, work done by UCA (University of the Creative Arts) in their business training sessions and with the London College of Communication (Appendix 5) give us clear options as to how to support this group, through group training and mentoring. One of the interviewees on the individual entrepreneur focus session also has given some guidance along this route but with the addition of a networking facility online and the creation of an “Unconference” which would provide an opportunity to explore modern networking techniques real-time.

ACTION: Take the creative and media sector as a starting point and, working with the universities and business in partnership, develop a coordinated pathway to business start-up and support for young business owners.

It may be a reasonable step in the next stage of research into this subject, to undertake such a conference rather than traditional research methodology. Bringing the target audience together within a freeform arena with the task of solving their own problems may generate the precise solutions that will enable them. This should then be supported on the periphery by a set of organisations that have experience in both business, business support and working with young people.

Finally, the one key point that has been made throughout all conversations, responses to questionnaires and general research, is the need for individual mentoring. This does not solely relate to young people in business, it has great effect throughout the age groups and various levels of experience and ability. What it must do, is to relate to the individual in an entirely non-confrontational manner, be intelligently supportive with a questioning rather than a lecturing approach. Here the Kent Foundation has put material into place to assist in creating an effective approach for would be mentors.

ACTION: The Kent Foundation should pilot a mentoring project that can be specifically assessed in terms of design, delivery, methodology and productivity taking on board the comments on technology and access to information.

This page is intentionally left blank