

By: Gaetano Romagnuolo, Policy Overview Research Officer  
To: The Student Journey Select Committee  
Subject: Address the employability of school leavers  
Date: Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2011

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Summary: To discuss and agree Terms of Reference and Scope for the Review

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## **Introduction**

Young people are the future of England and its economy. Raising their aspirations and creating the right opportunities to improve their skills and attitudes and to enter sustainable employment are crucial for their independence and the quality of their lives, as well as for the country's economic recovery and growth.

Global economic recession has resulted in falling youth employment. The proportion of unemployed young people aged 18 to 24 in Kent has risen dramatically, with an increase of over 100% of those claiming Job Seekers' Allowance between 2008 and 2010. But youth unemployment is not a single issue requiring one solution. Young people embark on different student journeys, and the issues for those who lack qualifications or work experience are different from those who hold vocational or academic qualifications.

Also, for many years the English education system has given much greater emphasis to purely academic achievements than to practical, vocational training, leaving a shortage of appropriately trained and educated young people to fulfil the different business needs. Formal qualifications are often a necessary but not sufficient condition for obtaining the types of jobs which young people aspire to.

Addressing the employability of young people is a crucial task if we want to contribute to the country's economic recovery as well as give the best possible prospects for future generations of workers in Kent.

## **Committee Membership**

The Select Committee consists of eight elected Members of Kent County Council:

Mr A Chell

Mr I Chittenden

Mr M Dance

Mr P Homewood

Mr S Manion

Mr M Northey

Mr K Smith (Chairman Designate)

Mrs C Waters

(Please note: Mr Richard Lees may serve as a co-opted member of the Select Committee; the discussion and agreement of his appointment will take place during the first meeting of the Committee)

## **Terms of Reference**

1. To investigate the extent to which learning and skills providers in Kent prepare young people for work, and enable them to apply their learning in a new context.
2. To explore the relevance of training and skills provision for young people against local labour market needs and growth industries in Kent.
3. To seek out and to listen to the students' voice, in relation to students' views about, and experiences with, their preparedness for work and their employability.
4. To examine the efficacy of partnerships between local businesses and local educators, and the opportunities that exist in Kent for young people hoping to enter the labour market at key transition points of their educational journey.
5. To look into the extent to which career information, advice and guidance (IAG) enables young people to make informed choices about their future education and employment at key transition points.
6. To consider the potential impact of changes in national policy on the educational and employment opportunities and choices of young people in Kent.
7. For The Student Journey Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

## Scope

The breadth and complexity of this topic requires a clear and focused approach. Possible key themes and aspects to be covered by the review are detailed below:

1. To investigate the extent to which learning and skills providers in Kent prepare young people for work, and enable them to apply their learning in the work-place context.
  - a. To consider the extent to which the content of courses in secondary schools, colleges and universities in Kent prepare young people for the world of work.
  - b. To investigate the extent to which secondary schools, colleges and universities in Kent adapt the structure of their courses to enable students to develop work-place skills and occupational experience.
2. To explore the relevance of vocational training and skills provision for young people against local labour market needs and growth industries in Kent.
  - a. To explore the extent to which current vocational training, apprenticeship and work experience schemes meet local market needs and the expectations of growth industries in Kent.
  - b. To consider whether additional training schemes, courses and qualifications are necessary in order to meet local market needs.
3. To seek out and to listen to the students' voice, in relation to students' views about, and experiences with, their preparedness for work and their employability.
  - a. To record the diversity of educational journeys that students take from dependent childhood into employment.
  - b. From the viewpoint of students, explore their views about, and experiences with, their preparedness for work and their employability.
4. To examine the efficacy of partnerships between local businesses and local educators, and the opportunities that exist in Kent for young people hoping to enter the labour market at key transition points of their educational journeys.
  - a. To investigate the effectiveness of current partnerships between employers and educators in Kent in helping young people access the labour market.
  - b. To consider the job opportunities that exist in Kent for young people at key transition points in their educational journeys (around 14, 16, 17/18 and 21 years).

5. To look into the extent to which career information, advice and guidance (IAG) enables young people to make informed choices about their future education and employment at key transition points.
  - a. To explore current policy and practices in relation to career IAG provision for young people in schools, colleges and universities in Kent at key transition points (around 14, 16, 17/18 and 21 years).
  - b. To consider whether the quality and reach of this provision could be enhanced.
6. To consider the potential impact of changes in national policy on the educational and employment opportunities and choices of young people in Kent.
  - a. To observe, during the review, whether national policy changes will take place in relation to the educational and employment opportunities and choices of young people in Kent.
  - b. To consider the potential impact of these changes – if any - on the educational and employment opportunities, and choices, of young people in Kent.
7. For The Student Journey Select Committee to make recommendations after having gathered evidence and information throughout the review.

## Timetable

**February/March 2011:** research and preparation.

**27 April 2011:** first meeting of Select Committee, to appoint the Chairman and to discuss and agree the Terms of Reference of the review.

**May:** contact and organise hearings and visits.

**June to October:** hearings and visits.

**November:** Committee meets to identify key issues and to make recommendations.

**December 2011/January 2012:** report writing, production of first draft.

**February:** Committee discusses first draft of report and suggests amendments. Amendments carried out accordingly. A meeting involving all key stakeholders may take place at this stage.

**March:** report shared with relevant Cabinet Members.

**March:** despatch for Corporate Management Team (CMT).

**March/April:** CMT meeting.

**April:** despatch for Cabinet. Report becomes “public”.

**April:** report presented to Cabinet.

**April/May 2012:** despatch for County Council.

**May 2012:** report presented to County Council.

## **Witnesses (oral/written evidence)**

Evidence may be requested from the following:

- Statistically valid data and appropriate research methodology.
- Young people aged between 14 and 21 years.
- Representatives of secondary schools, Further Education colleges and universities.
- Employers and organisations representing businesses.
- KCC senior officers, particularly those involved in employment and education for young people.
- Representatives of additional external organisations that can contribute with information and evidence to The Student Journey review.
- Academics, professionals, other witnesses who can make relevant contributions.

## **Site Visits**

Visits may be organised as part of the evidence gathering process.

### **Recommendation;**

To agree the Terms of Reference and the general approach to The Student Journey Select Committee review.

### **Contacts:**

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