

Select Committee - The Student Journey

Update

(x) The Select Committee has started its evidence gathering sessions and has interviewed key stakeholders including KCC officers, representatives of local businesses, academics, and representatives of careers education and apprenticeships services. It will continue gathering evidence until October 2011 by visiting businesses, schools and colleges, and by interviewing young people.

Potential areas for recommendation that have emerged so far include the following.

- Promote at strategic, county-wide level, the adoption of mechanisms that genuinely strengthen the link between local educators and businesses, and that enhance the employability of young people in Kent (for example, develop links between Vocational Skills Centres and local businesses, develop the role of Planning Forums, etc.).
- The way careers education and information, advice and guidance are taught in schools in Kent should be more consistent. It is suggested to promote and produce an “employability passport” for each student, which includes a checklist of activities and objectives every student must achieve in order to reach adequate employability standards. Also, in order to ensure good quality and consistent advice and guidance, KCC should develop with partner organisations a county-wide kitemark scheme.
- Evidence indicates that young people lack the “soft skills” (for example, punctuality, professionalism and motivation) that employers seek in potential employees. Also, careers education in schools is often taught too late. Finally, the business community - as well as the Wolf Report - points out that young people’s literacy and numeracy standards when completing compulsory education are generally inadequate.
- The great majority of businesses in Kent are small or medium-sized. Several of these businesses may find it challenging to invest time and resources in order to offer apprenticeship and work experience programmes. Kent County Council should develop further its important strategic role by increasing its support, advice and guidance to employers offering apprenticeships and work experience programmes. Red tape and bureaucracy should be cut to promote the setting up of apprenticeships by employers, and their take up by young people.

- About 5% of young people aged 16-18 in Kent are not in education, employment or training. As powerful collaboration structures between learning and skills providers already exist, KCC could encourage them to agree voluntary targets to reduce the number of young people who could potentially become NEETs when leaving school or college. A pilot scheme could initially be run for this purpose.
- Normally young people in Kent go through their education with a view to having three optional endings: continue their education, employment or unemployment. The option of being more entrepreneurial and of becoming self-employed should be promoted, and more information should be offered to young people about the support and guidance available to them.

(x) It is intended that the Select Committee will submit its final report to the Cabinet in April 2012 and to County Council in May 2012.