

Briefing note

To: Local Economy & Life Long Learning Scrutiny Commission

From: Danny Edwards, Strategy & Partnerships Manager

Title: Skills Strategy Update and South London Innovation Corridor

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Introduction

As part of the Scrutiny work programme, the Local Economy and Life Long Learning Scrutiny Commission is looking into post 16 and adult education provision and its link with the local economy. The critical context to this in Southwark is the delivery of the borough-wide Southwark Skills Strategy.

This paper provides an update on progress on delivery of the skills strategy across the principle areas of focus:

- All-age careers information, advice and guidance
- Labour market insight
- Sector specific skills offer

The paper also provides an update on the South London Innovation Corridor

Progress on the Delivery of the Skills Strategy

A Skills Partnership Group was set up to oversee the progress of the delivery plan. Membership of the group includes:

- Southwark Council, including Education and Local Economy
- Southwark Association of Secondary Heads
- Southwark College
- Morley College
- London South Bank University
- Southwark Works
- Southwark Construction Skills Centre
- Employers reps, including Business Improvement Districts and South Bank Employers Group

The group met in September 2018 and established three task and finish groups to scope out delivery across key areas: all-age careers information, advice and guidance; labour market insight; and sector specific skills offers. The three groups met to discuss opportunities, challenges and key issues for consideration in each area and reported back to the main Partnership Group in January 2019.

In January 2019, the Skills Partnership Group agreed to oversee learner and employer consultations as well as to continue to explore links between skills delivery and regeneration, looking at how regeneration projects can help to improve skills delivery in the borough.

All-age careers information, advice and guidance

This task & finish group reviewed the borough's careers advice offer. They noted that many schools are not meeting new duties around careers advice and guidance and many still don't have a named careers lead. School engagement is challenging and not all schools are meeting their duties to report destination data to the council. The group felt schools would welcome more support to meet requirements and Gatsby benchmarks and acknowledged that there have been particular difficulties in engaging academies. The group also discussed the importance of getting the right people from businesses to speak in schools to improve engagement.

The group also identified gaps in the offer for young people and those who are NEET as there appears to be a lack of access to comprehensive careers information. There is also a notable lack of intensive careers support for adults in work as one-to-one support provided by the National Careers Service is only available to adults who have been out of work for 12 months.

The all age careers advice and guidance task & finish group presented a draft careers advice framework to the group. This is intended to provide an overview of what support is available in the borough, how this can best be promoted and where there are gaps in provision. The group will now refine this framework in consultation with a range of partners. It will also explore opportunities to establish a digital platform to promote this information to residents, in collaboration with the Council's communications and digital teams.

Labour market insight

The labour market insight task & finish group discussed existing sources of skills data and evidence of employer demand. It noted that vacancy data is readily available but often lacks granularity at a skills level. They also reported that there is often inconsistency in the quality and availability of labour market information between different sectors. The group also discussed the lack of detailed data available on the skills levels of Southwark residents.

The group discussed the needs of different users of labour market insight: learners, training providers and strategic bodies such as the Council. For learners, this information can be useful in informing careers choices and needs to be engaging, providing a direct connection between the learner and employer. The group agreed that training providers should be encouraged to use labour market insight more actively in order to inform the curriculum and help match training and qualifications to employers' needs. Research and analysis providing a wider picture of the skills landscape may be useful to the Council to inform policy and further interventions.

The group discussed the GLA's ongoing development of a Knowledge Hub, as part of the Mayor's Skills Strategy, which is intended to improve quality and access of labour market insight across London. The Partnership Group directed that further work in this area should be aligned with the Knowledge Hub currently being developed by the GLA to avoid duplicating work and use resources efficiently. The task & finish group will now initiate conversations with the GLA to understand what this solution will offer and whether it will fulfill the needs of learners and training providers in Southwark.

Sector specific skills offers

The sector specific skills task & finish group explored key challenges and opportunities in Southwark's key growth sectors: hospitality, digital and health and social care, with a view to developing a sector specific skills and training offer in the borough. This would be based on the learning from the Southwark Construction Skills Sectors, which has had notable success in linking employers in the

construction sector with a large number of job-ready people. The group recommended that the hospitality and catering sector should be prioritised initially as there is a high recruitment gap, good engagement with employers in the borough and a good level of provision in terms of FE college facilities and courses for Southwark residents. The Partnership Group agreed to establish a working group focused on developing a hospitality specific skills offer which will now begin to develop proposals through engaging with schools, colleges and employers.

The task and finish group will also continue to engage with the digital and health and care sectors to better understand skills gaps and recruitment challenges in these sectors and how the partnership could usefully help to address these issues. The Partnership Group agreed to focus on digital skills at the next meeting taking place in April.

Learner and employer consultation

The Skills Partnership Group agreed that a focused consultation exercise with learners and employers will be undertaken to gain a better understanding of experiences of the skills system in Southwark. A questionnaire for learners and employers will be created in consultation with key partners including employment support and training providers who will then conduct focus groups with their audiences. Findings of the consultation would be collated and reported back to next Partnership Group meeting.

The South London Innovation Corridor programme

The South London Innovation Corridor programme brings together four boroughs (Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark and Wandsworth), and a world class partnership of higher education, entrepreneur support agencies and employers – aligned around a vision to catalyse inclusive Creative and Digital Industry growth. The £8m programme will provide an integrated approach to cluster development in central and local growth areas and is comprised of three strands of activity: 1. Workspace; 2. Business Support; 3. Talent Development.

The talent development element will run from 2019 and will provide financial resources and a sub-regional strategic approach to improving access to digital skills and career pathways into the creative digital industries sector. The programme will have oversight and representatives from employers and learning providers to help shape a needs-based response to learner and recruitment gaps.