Summary Report from the SWLEP HE Strategy Stakeholder Events- April 2018

1. Introduction

The SWLEP Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) highlights the need for an appropriately skilled and competitive regional workforce to achieve our growth ambitions and that the impact of both growth and replacement demand on the local economy will mean a requirement for approximately 106,000 higher skilled workforce with qualifications to degree level and above by 2022.

To tackle this challenge the SWLEP have drafted a Higher Education strategy to capture our current provision across the area, set out our ambitions, qualified the challenges and suggested solutions with an agreed road map to achieving them.

As part of this strategy development 2 stakeholder events were held to share the SWLEP HE evidence base and engage and consult stakeholders with the content of the draft Higher Education Strategy.

The purpose of these workshop events, held in Swindon and Devizes was to

- share the evidence base with the stakeholders including the identified areas of strategy focus,
- to sense check the findings with them and
- to provide them with an opportunity to shape and influence the development of the strategy.

The stakeholders represented a wide range of organisations including employers, providers, students, the local authorities and schools and over 120 delegates attended the events.

This report summarises the events and records the stakeholder feedback and will be included as an appendix to the final HE Strategy.

1.1 Background to the stakeholder events

Delegates were updated on:

- The commissioned evidence base & key conclusions
- The views from learners on their routes through HE (inc non-traditional routes & what motivates them to continue to develop higher skills)

Facilitated table discussions focussed on:

- How best to raise aspiration of all learners
- The stakeholder's existing and planned skills initiatives
- Employers skills and talent needs

The subsequent stakeholder contribution was rich and well informed and an interactive poll gauged their views on the priorities needed.

2. Feedback from stakeholders

The feedback from the facilitated table discussions is grouped into 5 themes

1. Learner/students aspiration/attainment
2. Employer perspectives
3. Provision
4. Economy/regeneration
5. Recruitment & retention of talent

A summary of stakeholder comments is included below with fuller stakeholder comment in the appendix. Additional feedback, captured from the end of event evaluation forms is also included.

2.1 A summary of stakeholder comments on learner/student aspiration/attainment focussed on

Need to create a culture - a real desire to learn, to improve, this will raise aspiration & improve attainment.

Young people need to know the implications of their choices (to study or work or combine the two)

Improve understanding of funding HE and how it can be managed

Young people and their parents/carers need clear information about implications of studying locally or further afield and how to compare institutions.

2.2 A summary of stakeholder views on the employer perspectives

Apprenticeship standards; not all in place for degree apprenticeships (yet)

More employer involvement needed- career advice and work experience, especially relevant to "technology"/"science";

Support Employers and providers to work together; GCSE's moving to T-level - understanding new qualifications etc

Employers NEED to work together.

This generation will travel - job and prospects are more important; Employers have a role to "sell" their offer;

Working closer with providers - more work placements at different stages of career - can employers actually support this level of an engagement?

2.3 A summary of the stakeholder comments on the regional HE Provision

Institute of Technology needed, not a University

Local university - benefit of new learners and people staying in the area. Preventing students leaving and not returning

Improve awareness of existing and planned local STEM provision which students could choose rather than leaving area

Local provision doesn't exist for adults to study whilst working

Education pathways are important, particularly for adults, in work learning;

Digital skills strategy around STEM should articulate the various digital skills in detail- Show linkage to careers/opportunities

It needs to meet the demands of learners - most adults wanting to stay local.

Supply & demand - don't assume if you build it, that they will come.

Develop flexible HE provision - meeting employer and industry needs;

Include partnerships with universities for research and development (knowledge exchange/innovation)

Nurture relationships between FE/HEI and employers to ensure they deliver the right curriculum (for industry)

Employers need to help promote the benefits of further study.

2.4 A summary of stakeholder comments on the impact of HE on the local economy & regeneration

Importance of the "Place Shaping" agenda and the area being an attractive place to study or return to.

Accommodation for students/young people needed in Swindon like key-worker accommodation blocks;

Need to make the place more appealing - cultural, night life etc;

2.5 A summary of stakeholder comments on the recruitment & development of talent

There is a need to consider how best to use an "education" offer to attract & retain talent

Local employers could be encouraged and supported to offer "university support grant"/work experience/summer internship to

build links with individual young
people (as a recruitment pipeline

2.6 Additional feedback, captured from the end of event evaluation forms

2.6.1 Delegates response to a question about their key learning points and actions they have "taken away"

- Focus on an offer targeted to specific sectors. Link to a place-shaping strategy to attract new businesses and learners.
- Promoting employer engagement and communication of our needs
- More needs to happen to support parents.
- More information is needed from and for employers and prospective students before higher education choices are made.
- I will follow progress of the strategy but without the gravitas of involving local larger employers I am unsure whether the output will achieve any traction.
- That a HE campus in Wiltshire is not necessarily a priority.
- All the barriers students are having that stop them progressing to HE.
- Delivering the 'non university' route message. Raise aspiration for vocational routes.

2.6.2 Delegates suggestions for addition to the HE strategy

- More activity to improve employer's awareness of using apprenticeships to upskill existing employees within their organisation & increase HE within Wiltshire.
- Best practice in workforce development and retention, creative ways to invest in staff.
- Engage schools in Somerset area, encourage all schools to pursue *all routes* to HE
- More work required with employers. Need to identify and engage the influencers and decision makers
- Make comparison with other LEP areas - where is SWLEP stronger/weaker and why?
- Focus on the financial benefits to learners of different HE routes
- Support the schools in responding to the offers made by companies
- Define what goods look like
- Include how emerging technology will change how education is delivered.
- Clarity of where UTCs fit in - the strategy needs to be holistic & inclusive.
- Include ways to use social media for peer to peer motivation (& promotion of advances of HE)
- The need to foster confidence and belief in all regardless of attainment at the time.
- How to incentivise young people who go away to university to return to Wilts/Swindon.

3.0 Next steps and further action

The key themes that stakeholders made at these events will be reflected in the draft SWLEP HE Strategy.

This will be presented to the SWLEP Board on 24th May. Further consultation will take place in June, July and August particularly to engage employers and consult on the economic impact of the HE Strategy.

4.0 Appendix

The full comments from stakeholders

4.1 Stakeholder comments on learner/student aspiration/attainment

Need to create a culture - a real desire to learn, to improve, raise aspiration

Young people need to know the implications of their choices (reliance on good CEIAG)

Financial awareness - improve understanding/dispel the myths of the costs of HE and suggestions of how it can be managed

Careers advice at all ages in all settings

Aspirations of learners in combination with support network need to understand employment high/well paid jobs available with right qualifications

Desire to study elsewhere as part of learning journey

Generate greater interest with underrepresented groups

Family support is as important as finances

Swindon stigma - lack of awareness of opportunities

Importance of improving the awareness of options and implications of choices

Aspiration or attainment?

Peer pressure can stop young people progressing at 16/18 but in later years it's peers who can support returners to education

Making contact with young people to offer chances to return to study

Recommendation to inform potential students that they can take qualifications in a step by step format and take breaks if they need one

Attainment - major barrier;

Need to split adults and young learners

Money is a key blocker on HE

Need to join up CEIAG across Swindon and Wiltshire;

Missing the How? Where is the link to the careers strategy?

Costs - graduates tax = debt - more information and options on degree apprenticeships - grants for over 25's

One size does not fit all – think "diversity"

Social mobility hampered by study/local/work local

What's Age profile of Swindon residents to compared to Bath/Bristol?

Include expectations and perceptions from graduates in strategy

6th Form College 70/80% going to University

Need to look at next level down i.e. yr11

Local HEIs already going into schools to target lower years

Maybe more from local colleges on progression routes

Key issues
> Parental guidance and engaging with parents as career advisors
> Lack of understanding around apprenticeships
> Do young people know more than their parents?
> Apprenticeship stigma
> Talk to businesses as parents
> Supporting Gov work on T-levels
> Finding the right apprenticeship

Link to future career prospects

Make it income related, show to parents the earning potential

Role models/case studies

Apprenticeship Ambassador Network

Mentoring

Peer to peer support – feeling part of cohort

Constant changes to academic programmes/entry level requirements and impact this has on young person's aspirations and confidence to attend university

Fatigue amongst students as a result of continuous assessment / heavy schedule

Lack of awareness/value placed on alternative routes to employment skills

Employer engagement starts too late – children in primary education need to be inspired

Technological advances are unknown at education level

Money – cost of education, visiting open days – needs to be better communicated to local schools which universities offer support to disadvantaged groups

Some employers concerned that cost of apprenticeships for adults is not worth it for the business (engineering firm) – and will the employee stay?

Need to change parents' views that university is the only option – schools have a role

Can be hard to "find" the apprenticeship route – UCCAS is very simple in comparison

Schools need to do more to promote alternatives

What about Careers Service?

Employers say colleges are not delivering specific skills that meet their needs.

4.2 Stakeholder comments on the Employer perspective

Apprenticeship standards not all in place for degree apprenticeships

Strategies need to include place shaping, we struggle with recent graduates (work readiness)

More employer involvement needed- career advice and work experience, especially relevant to "technology"/"science";

Peer knowledge - recent employed graduates going back into schools; Investigate more flexible access to HE for adults – delivery which accommodates family commitments

Levy changing the finance dynamic - working out what they can and can't do

Support Employers and providers working out how they fit into the landscape; GCSE's moving to T-level - understanding new qualifications as an employer;

Possibility of developing a skills passport;

to T-level - understanding new qualifications as an employer;

Issue that Educational providers don't offer training which is up to industry standard, i.e. use of

equipment and methods of analysis;

Hard for some employers to influence course content,

Employers and educational providers do not share common language,

Opportunity for educational providers to help employers to improve skills of in-house trainers;

Apprenticeship standards - industry led, not qualifications led;

Jobs - Employers ability to see transferable skills rather than focus existing experience

Attraction of non-traditional, highly skilled people - Harbour Project

English not first language often 5 or 6 steps to work;

Education Facilities needed to make students work ready;

Need to establish "tailor made" courses/modules to help train/recruit employees

Targeted investment to suit needs/demands;

An absolute NEED for employers to work together.

Businesses attending university open days to attract graduates (but if graduate has more than one offer will they choose Swindon?);

This generation will travel - job and prospects are more important; Employers have role to "sell" the offer;

Working closer with providers - more work placements at different stages of career - can employers actually support this level of an engagement

Employer flexibility required - understand that people can't always hit the ground running;

Develop the existing workforce; - career guidance in universities;

Understand/appreciate the generation gap between business owners and employers

At 18-23 people are keen to move away from SW

Should target demographic be older i.e. family orientated

No urban hub that can act as key attraction to younger (trendier?) demographic

Look at costings/finances and sell virtues of locally offered provision

Salisbury/Trowbridge/Chippenham/ Swindon focus towns for making campaigns

Being ultra-targeted on provision and link into key priority sectors

PR Campaign linked to priority sectors with parents & schools

Different schools with differing levels of information dependent on historical route

Flexible/part-time very important

Returner programmes

Access programmes

Employers' open days – look @ what we offer and why you need HE to work here (but it's easy coz here's a pathway)

Digital disrupters for education – we haven't got a university so let's do it differently lead the way.

Employer training on how to do HE degree apprenticeship

Enabling study – e.g. dedicated wifi networks for learners

Recruitment practice

Parental awareness – not just traditional routes in HE

Uni offer & opportunity is excellent for those who wish to/can access. But, offer of other options should be better communicated

Emphasis on degree and HE by employers is valued – not all employers look for this

4.3 Stakeholder comments on regional HE Provision

IoT instead of a University

Local university - benefit of new learners and people staying in the area

Oxford Brookes campus in Swindon 80% external vs 20% local

University creation (Hereford model)

Improve awareness of choices for STEM rather than leaving area

STEM hub

Local provision doesn't exist for adults to study whilst working

Lack of university - students leave and don't return

Provide from start to finish to degree level - particularly for adults, in work learning;

Digital skills strategy around STEM should articulate the various digital skills in detail

If focus is on STEM, more knowledge of delivery of why it's important; Show linkage to careers/opportunities

Should be STEM

Higher OU take up suggests we don't have the right offer locally;

Specifically attract delayed entry students wanting to upskill;

Needs to meet demands of learner - mostly adults wanting to stay local.

What's stopping Swindon from having a University?

Graduate flows - how does this compare to similar LEPs including those with a university?

Supply & demand - don't assume if you build it, that they will come.

There remains other universities still "local" to the LEP area - work closer with UWE/Bath/Oxford Brookes - IoT?

Do we challenge the OU offer - distance learning "v" local;

Developing flexibility of HE provision - meeting employer and industrial needs;

Mixed modes of delivery;

Offer of full and part time courses;

No mention of levels - Do we want to grow Level 4 or level 6?;

Lack of CPD funding - identify modules from degrees to benefit business - Certificates;

Partnerships with universities for research and development

Overcome perception/reality? (disputed) that FE colleges haven't got expertise in HE
Could FE providers contribute teaching and learning expertise to HE providers, whose strength isn't always in teaching and learning

Need to increase employer engagement with schools and young learners.
Have we looked at flexible delivery e.g. Open University/distance learning

Compressed modules in conjunction with a university

Need to know if OU degrees are used for careers progression
Create a university in Wilts?

The colleges are <u>not</u> offering the course that the employers <u>NEED</u> – need to improve this

What connections do the FE colleges have with employers to ensure they are running the right courses?

Big employers can get colleges to tailor make courses.
What more can we do to get universities to have satellite campuses?

How do you attract learners if course/uni has no track record – students want to know it will be value for money

4.4 Stakeholder comments on impact of HE on the local Economy & Regeneration

Study and market the local area/package (local infrastructure)

Importance of the Place Shaping agenda and the area being an attractive place to return to.

Market the area as attractive to people looking to settle

Developing Swindon's "life style" offer to attract young people/graduates - place shaping;

Identifying what will turn around the perceptions of Swindon as a place to live?

Accommodation for young people to rent in Swindon like key-worker accommodation blocks;

Need to make the place more appealing - cultural, night life etc;

Make link with "Place shaping"
　　　Infrastructure
　　　Digital
　　　Housing/rental

4.5 Stakeholder comments on the recruitment & development of talent

Consideration of other factors, e.g. transport, housing?

Maths recruitment poor at secondary school

Find ways of building learning in alternative ways, e.g. not needing maths for an engineering degree

Find new ways of attracting students to STEM subjects.

Teaching and learning is often a larger problem than student potential.

How best retain talent?
Local employers to offer "university support grant"/work experience/summer internship to build link with individual young person