



Derbyshire Education Business Partnership

Commerce House
Millennium Way
Chesterfield
S41 8ND
Tel: 01246 212 535
Email: enquiries@debp.org

Dear Sir or Madam

An open letter in response to the White Paper 'Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth'

Let me introduce you to Derbyshire Education Business Partnership (DEBP). We specialise in supporting the aspirational decision making of young people - aged 5 to 19 and up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) - to shape their future. As an organisation in your local area, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss our work with you.

We are a member of the Association of Education Business Professionals, a national network of highly experienced education business partnership organisations who are specialist brokers building sustainable links between employers and educational establishments.

You will appreciate that our response to the white paper - set out below - is based on experience and knowledge of the landscape.

An EBP response

The white paper setting out the 'plan' for supporting people to have successful futures appears to be a good development. However, people reading this from within the sector will have varying views on what all of this means. As an Education Business Partnership, we will have a different view and the two key elements that appears to be lacking are 'Partnership' and timescales.

There is much emphasis on the role of employers in the paper. Whilst we cannot claim to be an expert on the further education sector, we can talk with confidence regarding:

- pathways at post-16 including SEND
- school aged careers (and employability)
- STEM education and employment
- supporting educators and employers effectively and the influence they are being encouraged to exert over education

Partnerships

Employers can provide context to the curriculum, but they do not have the understanding of delivering lessons to meet the demands of the national curriculum. This has meant that for many years, careers have been seen as something separate from what students are taught and learn.

Whilst the development of Enterprise Advisers has been valuable, it is more effective if organisations have the ability to broker the world of work into the curriculum, providing context and motivation for young people.

The heavy reliance on STEM in the paper is a constant theme, as it should be, but one cannot help but feel that there is a narrow view of what Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths means within it. There are national initiatives already in place providing a vehicle for engaged and enthusiastic employees from STEM industries to volunteer. STEM Ambassadors receive training to undertake this effectively within learning (formal and informal). We deliver the STEM Ambassador Hub across D2N2, South and East Yorkshire and have a network of 3700 volunteers working across the area, delivering over 18,900 hours of support for young people and teachers. Please visit www.stem.org.uk to see the outstanding work being delivered in partnership.

DEBP further delivers a variety of initiatives all underpinned by employer input. This is not about employers deciding what they think young people need to know, it is about the wider career context and the employment journey. In addition, it involves bespoke design to engage future employees; delivered in a managed and partnership way. Teachers find this invaluable and employers feel comfortable that they can use their knowledge to support this. This is a partnership – not a group sitting outside of education deciding what schools ‘should’ be doing and then ‘telling’ them. There are fantastic examples of where businesses and schools are working together to close the gap between their worlds, just come and see for yourself locally and share this practice with others.

Employer led standards, with only collaboration (not partnership with education) is not going to meet the educational demands placed on schools and colleges dependent on meeting their curriculum brief. I assume that the design of curriculum will have to be part of the discussion.

Pathways

The pathways, to help ensure that training meets the needs of employers, highlighted on page 19 point 19 states:

‘Study at intermediate level (level 2) and below is particularly important for learners with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) who are overrepresented at these levels, and we are seeking views on the provision and qualifications that should be retained and improved to meet their needs.’

This neglects to mention a key pathway that delivers the best employment outcomes for learners with additional needs - Supported Internships. It is not covered by the suggestion of lengthening a traineeship, as learners are often not able to meet the requirements to progress into an Apprenticeship. However, they can absolutely fulfil roles that are often difficult to recruit to, where retention of staff is low and requires a constant cycle of training for new staff and heavy investment from businesses.

Supported Internships provide an ideal solution for businesses to address these issues and offers valuable work opportunities for a population that only has a 6% chance across the nation, of securing any type of employment. If this government really wants to recognise SEND applicants as viable employees, then a strategy must be developed to assist this group of exceptional candidates to have the chance to secure meaningful employment.

We would be happy to contribute to the consultation on this. Come and see the work being done around this in your locality and see the impact and positive outcomes for both young people and employers. See www.dfnprojectsearch.org for more information.

Careers Guidance

We welcome the strengthening of Careers Guidance in schools and colleges, however, this must be backed by funding to ensure that qualified staff are able to support this effectively and consistently. We provide a unique approach to this, which prevents young people relying solely on limited input from family members and teaching staff. Teachers are not guidance professionals and it is narrow to state:

‘We will equip the teaching profession to support a whole-school or college approach to careers education by building careers awareness into every stage of their professional development, from initial training to education leadership.’

There are impartial experts who develop programmes to do this, and schools’ and their Careers Leaders value this input. However, funding should be strengthened to match the commitment that this paper appears to offer.

The development of a whole school careers programme is one that we can speak with authority on; we developed and deliver our unique FIRST+ programme that actively supports secondary schools from Year 7 to Year 13 - visit www.debp.org/schools/secondary-2/first/ to find out more. However, we also start much younger. We focus on the primary phase to encourage broader thinking around role models and aspirations. This helps prepare children for the secondary phase and the decisions they will have to make.

Engage with us

The local area is filled with dedicated educators, exciting employment opportunities and engaging employees keen to inspire the next generation and together with organisations like ourselves, work to bring this together in a considered and sustainable way.

I offer you the opportunity to engage with us and identify where we can be best placed to support the economy and raise the aspirations of all young people.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Clare Talati
DEBP Managing Director