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West London Education and Skills Commission

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy Commission is to identify the solutions and means of applying and scaling up these approaches to maximise the employment of local young people and adults in West London workplaces. The commission will explore how to enable access to better career education and guidance, work based learning, promoting vocational and Higher Education, as well as opportunities to develop and maintain the skills to compete in a globally competitive market throughout their adult lives. The Commission will also explore how effectively knowledge is transferred between West London Higher Education institutions and the private sector.

Context

The youth unemployment rate in London is higher than the all-age average employment rate. To tackle this problem, and in line with the recommendations made in the 'London Ambitions' report,¹ it has long been argued that sustained focus is needed to enhance careers education and guidance and to promote enterprise and employability skills in school, Further Education and Higher Education curricula.

This will require the commitment and collaboration of all schools, colleges, employers, local authorities, career specialists and training providers, as well as young people and their parents/carers – but assessing the baseline in West London is unknown.

Apprenticeships are key in supporting young people transition into the world of work and, although progress has been made, it seems clear that further high quality and higher level apprenticeship opportunities must be created and promoted in West London businesses if the skills gap is to be closed. The areas in which to prioritise promoting Apprenticeships in the sub-region need to be identified.

The work of our Further Education colleges is also vital in offering people the chance to gain foundation, professional and technical skills, as well as in creating apprenticeships opportunities. However, they have

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been suffering from significant funding cuts in recent years and their future structure is now being reviewed.

Businesses' commitment to developing their employees' skills is clearly in their own interests. The CBI report *Business investment in skills - The road back to growth* evidenced that businesses are already investing a significant amount of time and resources in growing the skills of their staff, so that there are grounds for optimism.ⁱⁱ Given that backdrop, it would be interesting to understand what measures the West London business community has taken – or should take – to make a difference to their employees' skills base.

Historically, UK Universities were only concerned with teaching and research. A third mission has recently been brought to light focusing on the collaboration between universities and businesses.ⁱⁱⁱ It would be valuable to see how far these collaborations have developed in West London and how additional knowledge transfer between Universities and businesses would benefit the West London economy.

Core issues

The commission will focus on the following key areas:

- Supporting careers and employment for young people in West London
 - o Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) – what does the latest data suggest are the current and future skills gaps in West London?
 - o Implementing the recommendations of the 'London Ambitions' report in West London
 - To what extent is the London Ambitions Careers Offer being delivered in West London? Where are the gaps?
 - What is the future role of local authorities, businesses and non-profit organisations in delivering London Ambitions? How can they scale up their delivery?
 - What local examples of good practice exist in West London? What is the reach of initiatives focussed on Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) in the sub-region?
 - o Apprenticeships
 - What are the present levels of participation and achievement in West London?
 - What is the profile of West London's apprentice employers?
 - What sectors could benefit from further apprenticeships opportunities?
- The future of Further Education in West London
 - o What do we know success rates and impact on employability?
 - o How do FE colleges in West London engage with and support the business community?
 - o What is the current impact of further education funding cuts on colleges?
 - o Will the talent pipeline into the private sector be impacted? If so, what steps need to be taken to mitigate these risks?
- Lifelong learning
 - o How are employers in the sub-region presently investing in the developing the skills of their workforce? What are the best practice examples?
 - o To what extent is upskilling the West London workforce now employer or employee led? Does this vary by profession or sector?

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- Knowledge transfer
 - o What is the level of knowledge transfer between the West London Universities and private sector? How much HEFCE support is accessed and what are good examples of its application? How does this compare with other parts of the UK and other global cities?
 - o How would additional knowledge transfer between Universities and businesses benefit the West London economy? How might this be achieved?

Membership

We envisage about 10 panel members with a chair (or co-chairs). Members will be a mix of WLB members supported by external subject experts. The founding sponsor is Brunel University London.

Meetings

The commission will meet at least once every three months.

- Step 1: Gathering of evidence
- Step 2: Examination of evidence
- Step 3: Identifying options available and recommendations
- Step 4: Conclusions

Steps 1 to 3 will be supported by WLB's wider events programme, as well as group email lists for the panel members and secretariat.

Reporting

The commission will keep the WLB board updated on the progress of their investigations at quarterly intervals. These will also be available on the internet.

The commission's final report will be presented first to the board of WLB for endorsement in Q1/Q2 2017. It will provide critical input to shaping WLB's future public policy voice. The report will then be presented to the West London Alliance (WLA), local MPs, the Mayor of London and other key decision-makers.

Resources and budget

The commissions will be supported by the WLB staff team who will provide the secretariat. Meetings will be hosted by member companies. Additional expenses from hosting meetings to travel and design/print of publications will be underpinned by sponsorship.

Review

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed by the WLB and wider stakeholder community during February 2016. They will be approved and finalised by the end of March 2016 at the first meeting of the commission panel.

ⁱ The London Enterprise Panel and the Mayor of London's Office: *London Ambitions: Shaping a successful careers offer for all young Londoners* (June 2015) - https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/shaping_report_interim_19_june_sp.pdf [Accessed 4 Feb 2016]

ⁱⁱ CBI: *Business investment in skills. The road back to growth* - http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/1121443/business_investment_in_skills.pdf [Accessed 8 Feb 2016]

ⁱⁱⁱ R.J. Howlett (Ed): *Innovation through Knowledge Transfer* (2010), SIST 5, page 1.

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