

London & East Region Network Meeting

Monday 26th July (via Teams)

Notes and Actions

Welcome from the chair

Mark welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves. He outlined the meeting agenda. We are keen to use this meeting to help shape the agendas of future meetings and agree some shared priorities

Updates from local network chairs

Mark invited local networks to provide recent updates and any issues or concerns.

Anna (Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Milton Keynes):

- The network are focusing on provision mapping. There is lots of activity with local partners through LEP/LSIPs- who's doing what but what's coming next. Hopefully that will spark some business development.
- There are a few problems emerging around AEB- providers who have previously had healthy allocations missing out including primes- concerns re: financial sustainability and on the subcontracted supply chain.
- There is some work going on with Ofsted around safeguarding and effective governance.
- Apprenticeship starts still lower than hoped in some areas.

Nichola (AELP London):

- They are working closely with GLA across London as a network and good we're linking across activities on a regional level. There has been focus on roundtables and other activities on Adult Education Roadmap consultation.
- It is the AELP London Strategic Forum on Wednesday. They have a GLA speaker coming to talk about the academies programme, which focuses on green, digital, health & social care, creative and hospitality.
- They have the 'no wrong door' approach in London- all of the different offers and programmes for different groups across skills and employability.
- They are trying to position ITPs as delivering much more than just apprenticeships and ensuring we are a key stakeholder in the LSIPs.
- AELP London are developing an underlying action plan to keep us focused on driving the skills agenda but also supporting GLA with their skills priorities.
- We had the £32m Good Work For All announcement recently and ITPs have done well.
- Sharing concerns around furlough/ kickstart coming to end and what comes next to help with progression routes. How we work with DWP and other stakeholders to link opportunities.

Vanessa (Sussex):

- It is early days with LSIPs, but they were part of bid, linking ITPs in. They are using it as an opportunity to profile ITP provision locally.
- They have also had some AEB issues and EPA delays.
- There is some work afoot as a network around T Level promotion with a group of colleges.
- They are awaiting news around levy transfer and what it means for their projects.
- They organised apprenticeship graduation ceremony across Brighton and Hove and have another in Autumn for East Sussex.

Paula (Essex):

- They were surprised their LSIP bid was not successful. This was led by Harlow College and the network were involved. They are hoping to get some capacity funding.
- They are working with the Lower Thames Crossing project and involving members in delivering along the supply chain and planning accordingly. There are several large programmes across South Essex and Kent.
- Members also unsatisfied with AEB and queries on subcontracting are coming in.
- Study programme allocation an issue- niche providers have had (sub)contracts pulled (particularly in mid-Essex)- working with those furthest away from labour market.

Alison (Hampshire and Isle of Wight):

- Though their chamber were not successful with the LSIP, they did come to network meeting 2 weeks ago- it was the first time they had met. There is some further work to do on the role of ITPs. They were successful in the bid for Strategic Development Fund.
- The network have never worked as closely with 2 local LEPs, which is positive.
- LEPs have invested heavily in apprenticeship hubs- which could be a secret weapon locally? Good collaboration, mapping, levy transfer- one stop shop.
- They are also thinking about membership benefits moving forwards and potential collaborations.
- AEB is the biggest issue coming back.

AELP update and response to issues raised

- Jane advised that the AEB outcome is on everyone's minds. We have raised concerns about the delay and procurement process, including writing to Eileen Milner. AELP went out to the membership asking for feedback on individual bids. We are now pulling together common themes and will be writing to the Secretary of State this week regarding the process and impact and asking for urgent meeting. We are also thinking about what happens in future and will keep members posted
- On LSIPs- we are pulling together a position statement on this and how the system needs to interact with ITPs. It was interesting to hear feedback on engagement with providers as nationally, this seems to have been patchy. We have also written to successful chambers to request meetings. The view is that employers do not want to lead, they have their own businesses to run. However, the Minister is completely persuaded this is direction of travel.
- Jane and the AELP policy board group have a meeting with Keith Smith this week to discuss the commercial arrangements with ITPs, LSIPs and future funding arrangements. The impact could be severe if direction of travel is colleges leading. We got good air time on this through discussions on Skills Bill- peers have been coming to us to discuss and we have been briefing
[ACTION: Jane to update members on this meeting and advise on AELP's position]
- There are concerns from members around Kickstart, particularly that it is affecting apprenticeship starts and DWP are channelling people into this programme. All members agreed with this and advised on local concerns over progression from Kickstart into apprenticeships.
- Nichola advised that AELP London have the DWP go as guest speakers to every meeting. We are working on educating work coaches about different opportunities around apprenticeships and other programmes. We would like to coordinate this upskill from AELP London around linkage across programmes.
- AELP are working with ERSA on employment and skills- joint piece across board, what it is and how it should work in future. Will be underway over coming months. Will be coming to networks for input on that.
- We are expecting an imminent announcement from Treasury on traineeships, hoping that the market will open up on 16-18 delivery.
- Additional learning support

- Simon advised that the levy transfer issue is technical problem- this is why it has not been in the press- it will happen but there is a delay. Treasury really like this and think it supports SMEs/ better employer choice.
- On EPA- there changes in funding rules around pipeline. There is a historical issue problem with year-end. People may tactically hold back achievers depending on publishable data. EPAs still have limited capacity and some people on furlough.

[ACTION: AELP to circulate amended ITP research one pager].

Meetings moving forwards, AOB and meeting close

Mark led a discussion on how the network want to move forward in terms of agenda items/ guest speakers/ key points of focus

- Some key themes from the discussion today including joining up DWP/ DfE, value of ITPs, 16-19, AEB, T Levels, flexible apprenticeships, HTQs, accelerated apprenticeships
- [ACTION: Rebecca to share AELP position statement on T Levels].***
- Members felt online works well for the meetings and can be more focussed.
 - Members find it most useful to find out about national conversations AELP are having. They already have strong local relationships so do not feel general regional updates are needed, and could be duplication.

[ACTION: Mark and Rebecca can pull in standing agenda plan and how we want to move meetings moving forwards- and where we may add value with external speakers on certain issues].