

SSLEP Careers Hub Network

Purpose

1. To provide an update to the SSLEP Executive Group on the current activity of the Careers Hub Network.

Background

2. To address an ever-growing skills gap and a cycle of low aspirations across the SSLEP area we sought to bring together a myriad of random projects and partnerships between secondary schools, sixth forms and businesses to create a structured and sustainable approach to improve the careers education outcomes for all young people.
3. Consequently, the SSLEP introduced its successful Locality Project before the arrival of the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC).
4. At a similar time, the government formed the CEC, to address the same issues, and the CEC established Enterprise Advisor Networks across the country, working via LEPs.
5. As lead for Careers Guidance and Employability priority in the SSLEP's Skills Strategy 2016-20, Julie Obada, Strategic Manager Employment, Learning and Skills at Stoke-on-Trent City Council, manages the Careers Hub Network Team and links with the CEC.
6. Since its creation, the Careers & Enterprise Company has had an increasing role in supporting the implementation of the government's Careers Strategy, namely:
 - Rolling out the CEC employer engagement work across the whole country. This includes offering Enterprise Advisers (EAs) to all schools, supporting schools and colleges to increase the number of encounters they offer young people in their time in secondary school and college, and, inspired by the work in the Opportunity Areas (OA), increase the number of Cornerstone Employers.
 - Scaling up to support all 8 Gatsby Benchmarks (the blueprint for effective careers advice and guidance) and Careers Leaders in schools, which has been done via a series of Careers Hubs.
 - Testing and sharing best practice in STEM, SEND and primary.

SSLEP Delivery Model

7. The Careers and Enterprise Company school-business engagement projects have a pan-LEP operation; open to all, including the Staffordshire districts in the GBLEP area.

8. The CEC model consists of an Enterprise Advisor Network (EAN), with Enterprise Coordinators (EC) working with schools and businesses to develop strategic, structured and sustainable school-business partnerships.
9. The ECs work with Careers Leaders, Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members within a school, together with Enterprise Advisers (EA's), senior volunteers from business, to audit, assess and monitor against the benchmarks to address the skills gaps and improve the careers outcomes for young people across the LEP region.
10. In addition to the EA's from local companies, other businesses are engaged as Cornerstone Employers, who work together with their networks, the wider community and the local Enterprise Coordinator, offering an enhanced offer to schools and their pupils.
11. The model ensures a strategic fit across the SSLEP Careers Guidance priority and the SSLEP identified growth priority sectors, as well as mapping directly to the Gatsby benchmarks, the DfE national careers strategy and framework and also the DfE Careers Statutory guidance.
12. All schools and colleges in the EAN are expected, as a minimum, to work towards 100% of achievement of Gatsby benchmarks 5 and 6.
13. In 2018, we were successful in our bid to CEC to have a Wave 1 Careers Hub, consisting of 20 schools, who worked intensively to achieve all 8 Gatsby Benchmarks.

Progress to date

14. There are currently 85 schools signed up and engaging with the CEC network from approximately 117 target schools across the LEP, including Special Educational Needs schools, Pupil Referral Units and middle schools.
15. In the summer of 2020, a successful bid was made to the CEC for a Wave 3 Hub, which has expanded the Wave 1 Hub from 20 schools to 81. Only 4 schools declined the offer to join the Hub, but remain in the network. The 81 hub schools are divided into 4 area hubs: Stoke-on-Trent; Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands; Stafford, South Staffs and Cannock; Tamworth, Lichfield and East Staffs. The Careers Hub Network team comprises a Network lead, a Careers Hub Manager, and five EC's covering the 4 area hubs.
16. There are currently 70 unique employers signed up to the Enterprise Adviser Network (EAN) - the target is one EA per school. Including businesses such as Risual, Wavemaker, Eurocarparts, Wagstaff, Timing Solutions, Staffordshire Fire Service, NHS.
17. 67 EA/ School matches with EAs signing up during lockdown.
18. The Enterprise Advisors are drawn primarily from SSLEP priority growth sectors. There are multiple employers working with a wider offer for all SSLEP schools.
19. There are 12 employers signed up as Cornerstone Employers, including Ornuu, Eurocarparts, Staffordshire County Council, Together We're Better (TWB), Port Vale, NHS, Autonet, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, KMF, Stoke City FC, Seddon and Synectic Solutions. These employers are working on a SSLEP wide action plan, supporting our schools to achieve the Gatsby benchmarks based on the gap analysis produced by the local network.

20. Bringing schools and businesses together has seen huge shifts in school culture across some of our schools. School curriculum changes have seen schools and teachers working with businesses to rewrite lesson plans and schemes of work
21. Such collaboration is having an impact not just on student employability skills and aspiration but also on their academic attainment.
22. For example, with an impact of 66% students in the project achieving higher grading and 33% of students going up an entire grade.
23. There are now multiple working groups supporting this across the county, and during the teacher CPD sessions to drive curriculum change around 50 teachers are engaged online for each session.
24. Successful completion of an Opportunity Area funded programme in 35 primary schools in Stoke-on-Trent. This project aimed to connect children at the primary learning stage with the world of work and career-related learning.
25. The project supported the connectivity of school to business engagement and offered in-school support, to ensure the engagement sits within a strategic framework, is mapped and embedded into school policy, programme, curriculum and culture.
26. It had been hoped to roll out this primary project across the SSLEP area, but a current lack of funding has prevented this. Various sources of funding are being pursued when available.

Challenges and Opportunities

27. Funding from the CEC has been confirmed until the end of August 2021, and the CEC are hoping that funding will be confirmed for a further 3 years until 2024.
28. The achievement of full coverage of the 117 schools and colleges will require additional match funding, which the team are actively seeking.
29. SSLEP does not currently contribute financially to this programme. Match funding to CEC comes from city council, county council and the private sector (The Inspirational Learning Group).
30. Whilst the pandemic has presented challenges around careers activities, it has enabled new ways of working to be introduced, with virtual CPD training for school careers leaders and virtual tours of the workplace. It has also given time to employers and careers leaders to bring careers into the core curriculum, with a lot of work being done on lesson plans and curriculum plans.
31. Careers activities are helping young people re-engage with learning, and manage the transition from the COVID 19 'world and how it has impacted on them to the 'new normal'. Young people are developing skills around resilience, managing change, adapting to new situations and increasing confidence and skills in communication – the beginning of their 'employability skills' for their future.

Contact Officers

Julie Obada, Strategic Manager – Employment, Learning & Skills, Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Anthony Baines, Assistant Director for Skills & Employability, Staffordshire County Council

Paul Williams, Careers Hub Manager