



East Sussex Creating Opportunities Strategy

2012 to 2014

Draft for Consultation



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Strategy

Introduction

Creating opportunities for young people is at the heart of what we do. We want all young people in East Sussex to participate in education and training that enables them to fulfil their potential; that develops their skills so that they can progress successfully to further education or employment; and that helps them to be active members of their communities. We have listened closely to young people and know from them what is working at the moment and what needs to improve.

We are embarking on a new relationship with our schools, colleges, other providers and partners where increased autonomy sits alongside the need to work together to ensure young people experience a successful journey through education into the world of work. Our ambition is to work together to help raise young people's aspirations and to ensure the right opportunities and support are available to fulfil those aspirations.

This strategy outlines how we will work together with our key partners and providers over the next two years to ensure that by 2015 all young people in East Sussex are able to participate in education, training or employment with training until their 18th birthday. We believe that this will help all young people to gain the skills they need to progress successfully into further education and employment. We recognise the challenges this ambition presents to us, against a national backdrop of rising youth unemployment, difficult economic times and reducing resources but believe that this is even more reason to ensure that young people are best prepared for entering the labour market and that the most vulnerable are prioritised for support.

The government has outlined its commitment to the Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) in the White Paper, "The Importance of Teaching", and the Education and Skills Act 2008 increases the minimum age at which young people in England can leave learning,

requiring them to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 from 2013 and until their 18th birthday from 2015.

Raising the Participation Age (RPA) does not mean young people must stay in school; they will be able to choose one of the following options:

- full-time education, such as school, college or home education
- work-based learning, such as an Apprenticeship
- part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering for more than 20 hours a week.

The government has recently published the cross departmental 'Building Engagement, Building Futures' strategy. This strategy sets out the key issues and priorities for increasing the participation of 16 – 24 year olds in education and employment. The priorities and actions outlined in our strategy lay the foundations for how we will, together with our providers, partners and other teams in the local authority, encourage participation beyond 18.

What abilities and skills do learners need for tomorrow?

'As our business models change and adapt to constant flux, learners will need to be much more adaptable – capabilities developed through broader education are now becoming equally critical to occupation-specific skills. This means having problem-solving skills, using resources creatively and being enterprising, irrespective of whether one is pursuing an academic or vocational learning route.'

Learning and Skills Network Centre for Innovation.



Strategic themes

Our strategy is based around the key themes identified by the Department for Education (DfE) as crucial building blocks to preparing for full participation:

1. **Communication and raising aspirations**
2. **Transitions and tracking**
3. **Support mechanisms for vulnerable learners**
4. **Mix and balance of provision**
5. **Improving 16-19 outcomes and further progression**

Each strategic theme has its own section in the document which outlines its national and local context, our strategic priorities for 2012-14 and issues and actions for our partners to consider.

Outcomes

Through working together on the themes outlined in this strategy we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- An increase in the participation of 16 and 17 year olds in education and training
- A reduction of the number of 16 and 17 years that are not in education, employment or training (NEETs)
- An improvement in the outcomes at Key Stage 5 for learners across East Sussex, at or above the national average for key measures
- An improvement in the achievement of vulnerable learners at Level 2 and Level 3 by 19 years old
- An increase in the numbers of learners taking apprenticeships and employment with training routes

Links to other East Sussex plans and strategies

This strategy sits alongside the Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service (SLES),

Learning Improvement Strategy 2012 – 2014 and supports the delivery of all its key strategic objectives, particularly:

- To secure high quality education and training opportunities for children and young people to age 19 and up to the age of 25 for Learners with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities (LLDD).
- To support schools and colleges, parents and pupils to secure full participation in education, employment and training to 18 and LLDD to 25.

This strategy also links closely to the SLES Achieving Potential: Closing the Gap Work Programme.

Who is this strategy for?

This strategy is for a wide range of providers and partners: some of whom we are already working closely with and others where a closer working relationship will contribute towards delivering full participation.

This includes: maintained schools and special schools; academies; colleges; private training providers; third sector providers; JobCentre Plus; teams within Children's Services and East Sussex County Council; District and Borough Councils and neighbouring County Councils.

The strategy may also be of interest to national funding bodies such as the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and to the DfE to inform them of our strategic priorities for 16-19 year olds and to show we are preparing for our duties under RPA.

Under each strategic theme suggestions are made for some of the issues that partners may wish to consider, and possible actions they may wish to take either individually or by working in partnership.

"By 2021 East Sussex will have a strong, resilient, inclusive and balanced economy built on an expanded private sector base in a county recognised for its distinctive character and excellent connectivity."

Draft East Sussex Economic Development Strategy, 2011



Understanding the cohort

In order to meet the needs of all young people in 2015 we need to know who is currently participating and who is not. We need to be able to project the size of the population cohort and the anticipated learner numbers. At a local level providers and partners need to understand what impact RPA will have on their own institution and partnership area and plan together to meet the identified learner need and demand.

National and East Sussex landscape

The latest national figures for participation of 16 and 17 year olds are for 2010 and were reported in the DfE Participation Estimates, in June 2011. For 16 year olds East Sussex had 93% participating compared to a national figure of 96.1%, and for 17 year olds 85% compared to a national average of 87.2%.

Though our local data shows that the participation of 16 and 17 years old has improved we still have significant progress to make to achieve full participation by 2013 and 2015.

In 2010 we commissioned a data report to further understand the impact of RPA on East Sussex learner numbers. Data from this report shows us that to secure full participation for 16 year olds by 2013:

- an additional 234 16 year olds will need to enter education and Work Based Learning (WBL)
- the number in employment with training will need to increase by 34 16 year olds
- The number of 16 year old NEETs will need to decrease by 129 to 32

The report also shows us that to secure full participation for 17 year olds by 2015:

- an additional 209 17 year olds will need to enter education and WBL
- the number in employment with training will need to increase by 118 17 year olds
- The number of 17 year old NEETs will need to decrease by 320 to 63

We have detailed information on both those participating and those that are currently not in education, employment or training. A data pack is provided in Appendix 2 which shows data for East Sussex and the four local areas on participation, outcomes and RPA modelling targets. This data should be useful for providers and partners to help identify key issues and priorities in their local area.

Strategic Theme 1: Communication and raising aspirations

Young people, parents/carers and professionals need to be aware of the requirement for young people to stay on in education, training or employment with training until their 18th birthday from 2015. We need to work with young people, their parents and their communities so that they understand what this means and the benefits of staying on in education. The delivery of high quality impartial Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CE IAG) is essential to ensure that learners develop high aspirations for their futures and identify realistic pathways to achieve these.

National and East Sussex landscape

The Department for Education (DfE) have supported, since 2009, a series of local projects to help local authorities and their partners prepare for RPA. The projects have focused on local solutions under the themes: CE IAG, support for the most vulnerable, and developing provision. Good practice from these projects is shared on the DfE website. The DfE also appointed, in 2010, 'Local Leaders' to help support other local authorities in preparing for RPA. East Sussex was appointed as one these local leaders and has been working with a range of local authorities regionally and nationally.

East Sussex has been part of these DfE projects since 2009, and we are now in our third year. In the first year we led a communications campaign locally about RPA directed at learners and parents/carers. This included leaflets for parents and carers, an i-phone app about careers, and parent focus groups. This campaign helped raise awareness amongst learners and their



parents/carers. It also highlighted what the changes would mean for a range of professionals and therefore provides a good foundation for our activities in 2012-14.

Focusing on improving the communication to parents/carers continues to be a key part of our activities. The new SLES Achieving Potential: Closing the Gap Work Programme also identifies parental engagement as a key strand and we are aligning our work across all Key Stages to help raise aspirations of young people and parents/carers.

Our Priorities for 2012-2014

- Work with our providers and partners to develop approaches to raising aspirations and communicating the message about RPA in local partnerships.
- Support schools, colleges and other providers to deliver their new duties in relation to Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CE IAG) in order to support attainment and progression to education, training and employment.
- Listen to young people's views to improve how we communicate with them to provide information and raise awareness.
- Communicate with employers to help them understand the new legalisation in relation to RPA and how this will affect them.

How will we achieve these?

- Develop and consult on a new East Sussex CE IAG Strategy that responds to the changed responsibilities, and support its implementation across the county.
- Produce materials, including the RPA Toolkit and on-line materials, for schools, providers and partners to use with learners, parents/carers, professionals and governors.
- Re-develop the Connexions 360 website so that it is more relevant for young people, develop and implement various forms of social media such as Twitter, texting and Facebook to communicate directly with young people.
- Work with schools, providers and partners to pilot new ways of raising aspirations

with young people, including the use of on-line tools.

- Develop materials for employers, and identify the most appropriate channels through which to communicate with employers.

Some questions for your institution and your partnership to consider:

- How have you communicated RPA to staff, learners, parents/carers and governors? Are the changes well understood?
- How are you planning to deliver your new CE IAG duties from September 2012?
- Have you considered what Continued Professional Development (CPD) will be required for staff taking on new responsibilities for CE IAG?
- How embedded is your work on raising aspirations? Are there particular groups of learners that would benefit from more focused activity to help to raise their aspirations and those of their parents/carers?
- How could you use coaching, student/parent ambassadors and peer mentors to help raise aspirations?
- Are feeder primary schools aware of RPA, and are you working with them to consider how they can help to prepare their learners?
- How can you further raise aspirations with Year 12 learners to progress successfully to Year 13?

Strategic Theme 2: Transition and tracking

Improving and supporting the transition of learners between key stages is crucial to ensuring that young people continue to be engaged in education and can progress successfully. Preparing for transition needs to start early on in primary schools with increased focus and support up to the transition from Key Stage 4 to 5. In order to support transition we need good tracking



information about where learners are, to identify those who need more support.

National and East Sussex landscape

National research shows us that early intervention is most successful at preventing disengagement later on in life. Being able to identify young people at risk of disengaging and then supporting them to make a successful transition is essential to prioritise resources and encourages providers and partners to work together for the benefit of an individual. In East Sussex we pioneered the development of a Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI), this is now being used by schools in East Sussex and we continue to develop the tool so that is relevant and useful.

In East Sussex the majority of Year 11 learners (approximately 86%) progress onto a new post-16 setting, with a significant majority attending one of the four colleges in the county. We have higher participation at 16 years than at 17 years old. In 2010 we conducted an investigation into the experience of learners who had made the transition from a school to a college. Key findings from this report identified areas for development in communicating with learners and parents, and increasing collaboration between schools and colleges on teaching and learning and pastoral support. As part of the DfE RPA project in 2011/12 we have commissioned four Progression Projects with groups of schools and colleges to implement a number of the report's recommendation.

The Connexions service is no longer able to track all young people and we need to work in partnership to ensure that we can track the destinations of young people effectively. This requires providers and partners to work even more closely together to share information and for robust data sharing agreements to be consistently implemented.

Our Priorities for 2012-2014

- Improve the data that is available to learning providers to support their curriculum planning, in particular, RONI and attainment data by provider and local partnership area.

- Facilitate the development of independent learning skills that will support young people's transition and ensure successful outcomes post-16.
- Support schools and colleges to work in partnership to improve the transition experience for learners moving from Key Stage 4 to 5 and at age 17.
- Develop new methods for tracking young people without a universal Connexions service.
- Continue to implement the September Guarantee, working with providers and partners to ensure all young people have an offer.

How will we achieve these?

- Agree and implement a multi-agency data sharing agreement between ESCC and post-16 providers.
- Promote and support the use of RONI in all secondary schools
- Offer support to providers through our traded services for supporting transitions and developing independent skills.
- Embed the good practice from the Progression Projects across all schools and colleges in East Sussex.
- Work with other Children Service's teams and our targeted Connexions providers to target support on vulnerable young people through key transition periods.

Some questions for your institution and your partnership to consider:

- How can you work more closely with your local school/post-16 provider to support learner transitions? Have you agreed a transition timetable and nominated named staff to lead on transition?
- Have you developed a model of shared CPD/staff exchange and shadowing to promote improved cross-phase understanding?
- Do you use RONI to identify learners at risk? How could this information be used with post-16 providers to support the transition of vulnerable learners?



- How do you use the Intended Destinations and September Guarantee process to identify learners at risk and what support can you put in place for these learners to support their transition?
- Do you keep in contact with Year 11 or Year 12 leavers? If so how can you use this information to help the local authority track young people more effectively and to raise the aspirations of your current learners as part of the CE IAG process?

Strategic Theme 3: Support mechanisms for vulnerable learners

To ensure that all 16 and 17 year olds can participate requires a specific focus on those that are most vulnerable. National evidence suggests that early identification and support is crucial to ensuring that these young people can go on to achieve and participate. This support needs to be well co-ordinated across a range of partners and services.

National and East Sussex landscape

Nationally and locally we know that vulnerable groups often achieve lower outcomes than other learners.

Our data on young people who are NEET shows us that over 45% of NEET young people have some form of a learning difficulty or disability, and of these that 45% present with a behavioural emotional and social difficulty. The data also provides us with details on who NEET young people are, particular groups that present high numbers of NEETs include: those supervised by the Youth Offending Service, teenage parents and pregnant mothers, those with accommodation issues and care leavers and children who are looked after.

We have rightly targeted reduced resources on the most vulnerable young people. Our Connexions service now includes a team based in the Transition Service that supports young people with Special Educational Needs, and a team of staff located in our third sector provider CRI who support NEET young people with multiple and/or complex barriers

to participation. The Targeted Youth Support Service works in partnership with schools to develop packages of support for young people 11-19 most at risk of under achievement. We need to work closely with a range of other services and teams to co-ordinate effectively the support we can provide to these learners and make sure that the support available is well promoted. The strategic priorities and activities outlined here align closely with those in the new SLES Achieving Potential: Closing the Gap Work Programme.

Our Priorities for 2012-2014

- Improve the data that is shared with providers and partners to help them identify learner needs and support requirements, including data on FSM, RONI, destination and NEET data.
- Ensure Connexions resources and support are focused on those most at need.
- Improve the co-ordination between our Connexions targeted services and other Children's Services teams and services to ensure effective support between services.
- Work in partnership with providers and partners to implement strategies to improve the outcomes of vulnerable learners.
- Work with local providers to develop their provision for LLDD, in order to provide 'progressive' and 'holistic' experiences that support the development of skills for independent living and, where appropriate, prepare learners for employment.

How will we achieve these?

- Implement the good practice from the pilot of the Vulnerable Learner's Protocol across the county.
- Facilitate a range of cross-service meetings and programme of activities to support the co-ordination of support across providers, partners and services.
- Develop the Foundation Learning Directory for pre and post-16 opportunities.



- Develop CE IAG resources for specific vulnerable groups and their parents/carers in partnership with other teams and services.
- Identify and share good practice with providers and partners across the county.
- Implement the SLES Achieving Potential: Closing the Gap Work Programme to raise the attainment of vulnerable learners.

Some questions for your institution and your partnership to consider:

- How do you use RONI and/or destination data to plan the support required by vulnerable learners, and to evaluate the impact of the support provided?
- Does an appropriate member of staff have up to date knowledge of the range of support on offer for young people 16-18, for example financial support, support from Children Service's and CRI? Do staff require any further information or CPD?
- How well promoted is the 16-19 Bursary Fund and other support funds you may have to other professionals, learners, parents and carers?
- How do you work with your local school/post-16 providers to plan for the transition of vulnerable learners?

Strategic Theme 4: Mix and balance of provision

Working closely with our schools, colleges and providers we need to ensure that the range of provision can meet the needs of all our learners. This involves a clear identification of where the gaps are and responding to learners' needs and demands.

National and East Sussex landscape

There have been significant changes to curriculum policy over the last eighteen months, with changes heralded in the White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching', the Wolf review of vocational education and the introduction of the English Baccalaureate. All this means that schools and providers are re-considering their curriculum offer. Schools

and providers need to work collaboratively to ensure that there are appropriate progression pathways for learners within the new offer.

Over the last four years we have worked closely with providers to increase the amount and range of 16-19 Foundation Learning (Level 1) and Level 2 provision that is available and increased the amount of in-year and flexible starts. One of the provision gaps that remains is the need for employment with training opportunities and we have successfully piloted a nationally recognised Work Pairing project and a project for young people with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties (BESD).

The government continues to support an increase in the availability of apprenticeships and has introduced a small-scale access to apprenticeship programme. Apprenticeship participation for young people aged 16-18 in East Sussex has increased by 10.2% between 2008-9 and 2009-10, which is almost double the regional and national increases. In 2010/11 8.3% of 16-18 year olds were participating in apprenticeships, this is below the participation levels seen at a regional and national level.

Our Priorities for 2012-2014

- Develop appropriate progression routes for learners who achieve 5 A*-C at age 16 but not including English & Maths and ensuring that they receive appropriate information, advice and guidance.
- Increase the involvement of third sector providers in delivering 16-19 learning opportunities, supporting collaboration with mainstream providers.
- Continue to develop employment with training projects to increase the range and type of provision on offer across the County.
- Develop a shared understanding of how new Key Stage 4 curriculum models affect learner progression and outcomes, including closing attainment gaps.
- Continue to support the development of the foundation learning offer in response to the national review of this pathway; ensuring appropriate provision and



progression for all learners, ensuring the successful delivery of functional skills and reducing out-of-county placements for learners with learning disabilities or difficulties (LLDD).

- Work with National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) training providers and other key partners and providers to increase the number of Apprenticeships on offer and taken up in East Sussex.

How will we achieve these?

- Work closely with schools to help them understand the changes to curriculum policy and how these can be best implemented in the school.
- Work with post-16 providers to identify gaps in provision and support providers to develop curriculum collaboratively in order to fill any gaps.
- Continue to develop the Key Stage 4 Personalised Foundation Learning Directory to ensure that there is a good offer for schools to choose from for their learners.
- Ensure that relevant and up to date information on 14-19 provision is accessible through Connexions 360.
- Further promote and develop Apprenticeships and Work Pairing Placements across the County and in other public sector bodies.
- Support the setting up of an Apprenticeship Training Association in East Sussex to encourage more Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to take on apprentices.

Some questions for your institution and your partnership to consider:

- Are you discussing any planned changes to Key Stage 4 curriculum models with partner schools and post-16 providers to help them plan for possible changes in learners' post-16 choices?
- Does the menu of CE IAG and taster sessions for vocational courses need to be adapted in light of reduced 14-16 vocational uptake from learners to help learners better understand vocational sectors?

- How can you further develop links with voluntary sector providers to engage hard to reach learners?
- Do pastoral and subject staff need further information and advice on employment with training opportunities and apprenticeships?
- Could you take on an apprentice or offer a placement for Work Pairing? Can you identify additional opportunities amongst employers on your Governing Body or in feeder primary or secondary schools?

Strategic Theme 5: Improving 16 to 19 outcomes and further progression

With more young people participating we need to ensure that there is a continued commitment to improving outcomes at Key Stage 5, implementing a range of strategies and actions that improve the achievement of learners. We also need to work together to ensure that there is good progression of learners at 18 onto further education or employment.

In order to support more young people to make a successful transition into the workplace and contribute to the creation of a sustainable, vibrant local economy, we need to increase the focus on skills and employability from age 14 upwards. This must build on a stronger understanding of the world of work from the later years of primary education. We must develop a culture of enterprise in our young people, supported by the skills and aspirations needed to create and grow new businesses in key sectors during the recession and beyond.

National and East Sussex landscape

East Sussex performs below the national local authority indicator for the numbers of learners achieving Level 3 by 19. Whilst we have some colleges with success rates in the top 90% nationally and some school sixth forms with good average point scores, good performance is not consistent across the whole provider network. We need to work together to understand differences in performance and further improve learners'



outcomes in this Key Stage for key measures.

Youth unemployment continues to increase nationally and locally in response to the economic climate. We need to work together to ensure that we are preparing young people for employment and/or further education. We must continue to reduce the number of young people who are NEET and to address unemployment in 18-24 year olds. As entry to the workplace remains particularly challenging for young people, we must build on the innovative employment with training programmes we have developed and ensure that these provide excellent pathways into sustainable employment. In order to achieve these aims we must work effectively with employers to improve their involvement in curriculum design/delivery, support the development of employability skills and increase the range of opportunities available for apprenticeships and work experience.

Following the publication of the Wolf review of vocational education, the government is consulting on the removal of the statutory duty to deliver work-related learning at Key Stage 4 and on study programmes for 16-19 year olds. The latter consultation includes a proposal to introduce high quality internships or other forms of experience of the workplace.

The past year has seen a significant decrease in East Sussex in the number of schools offering block work experience placements to their learners in Key Stage 4. Extended placements remain strong in many schools, and there is considerable interest in a new bespoke placement service which provides additional support for hard to place learners and the employers who offer them a placement.

Our Priorities for 2012-2014

- Continue to raise achievement at GCSE and to close the attainment gap between learners vulnerable to under achievement.
- Increase the numbers of young people achieving Level 3 by 19 and raise attainment levels.
- Work with schools, colleges and school sixth forms to ensure learners are well prepared for Level 3 studies, including the further development of good independent learning skills.
- Develop the range of work placements and internship opportunities to provide excellent routes into work for young people, especially those who will find the transition to the workplace most challenging.
- Work with schools, colleges and other providers to promote further opportunities for developing the employability skills of young people.

How will we achieve these?

- Facilitate the network of School Sixth Forms to share good practice and support improvements in outcomes.
- Work in partnership with our four colleges to share good practice and support improvements in outcomes across the sector.
- Develop our work experience offer to include bespoke provision for LDD learners, opportunities for accreditation alongside placements and placements that bridge Key Stage 4 to 5 for the most vulnerable learners.
- Ensure that the Key Stage 4 and 5 curriculum equips young people with the employability skills they will need to make an effective transition into Further Education and beyond that into Higher Education or employment.
- Work with schools and colleges through our traded service offer to support teaching and learning and target setting at Key Stage 5.
- Identify employer organisations that we can work with to promote the range of ways they can support young people's education.
- Engage with large employers working locally to develop sponsorship and other opportunities for young people, including involvement in curriculum development and delivery; support for CEIAG; engagement with programmes such as work experience; work pairing and apprenticeships.
- Explore opportunities to add social responsibility clauses to LA contracts, to



ensure that contracts provide opportunities for young people including apprenticeships and work experience.

Some questions for your institution and your partnership to consider:

- How can you work more effectively with your partner schools/colleges to support learners' transition to Key Stage 5 – can you better prepare them for the differences in teaching and learning?
- How do you help develop and promote employability skills for your learners? What else could you do and do you have examples of good practice that you could share?
- What links do you have with employers? Have you considered using free inspirational speakers from the TES Growing Ambitions project or Inspiring Futures?
- Does your institution offer as much support and guidance for young people seeking an apprenticeship or a job as you do for those completing a UCAS application?
- After evaluating 2010/11 Key Stage 5 outcomes can you identify good practice to share with other providers or areas where you would like some support?
- Could you take on an apprentice or offer a work placement for a young adult? If you do so already how can you support your partners (such as employers on your governing body or your feeder primary schools) to provide similar opportunities?

How can you work with partners to develop a shared understanding of the features that contribute towards a high quality work placement which develops employability skills and helps young adults in their transition into the workplace?



Appendices

Appendix 1: Developing employability skills 18 to 24

The main part of this strategy focuses on ensuring that all young people participate in learning until the age of 18. However, this focus could have the unfortunate consequence of simply delaying the challenge of moving into the workplace by two years. It is therefore important to make 18-24 year olds a key priority group and to work with a range of partners to ensure their successful transition into sustainable employment. This document therefore starts to articulate a coherent strategy for this age group which will inform our priorities, shape project activity and help us to identify future funding opportunities.

It is also important that we consider this age group as the future work force of East Sussex, who must be provided with the skills and opportunities they need to help secure the economic prosperity of the county in the years to come. Therefore we must ensure that our focus on skill development for this age group aligns with the county's economic priorities. This means that they must be equipped with the skills the private sector will require for growth, particularly higher level skills (levels 3 and 4). Our strategy must also consider the identified growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing and engineering, business services, emerging technologies and the development of entrepreneurship.

There also needs to be a focus on developing the employability skills of young adults in the areas of coastal and rural deprivation. This will help to break the intergenerational cycle of worklessness which blights aspirations and opportunities for individuals and reduces the overall productivity of the local economy.

National and East Sussex landscape

Youth unemployment rose to 1.02 million in September 2011, of which just over 200,000

were aged 16-17. The government has responded by announcing a three year Youth Contract scheme, which will include work experience placements for job seekers; wage incentives for employers to offer apprenticeship and work experience places and a programme to support 16 and 17 year olds to find work or training.

The state of the national economy is making the job market increasingly challenging, especially for young people. The growing trend for graduates to seek entry level jobs is creating a strong downward pressure on the youth job market and squeezing still further the opportunities available for the most vulnerable. Increasing university fees are likely to increase this pressure. In November 2011 UCAS was reporting a 13% decrease in university applications in advance of the closing date for applications in January 2012.

In East Sussex the number of 16-24 year olds claiming Job Seekers' Allowance in October 2011 fell slightly, but rates remain high at 5.8%. The number of younger claimants rose to 9.5% in Hastings. The claimant rate is particularly high among males aged 16-24, with 7.7% of young males in the county claiming. Hastings has the highest claimant rate for this group which reached 13.6% in October.

The East Sussex economy is dominated by service industries. In 2009, 85% of jobs in the county were in this service sector. One-third of all people who work in East Sussex are employed in public administration, education or health, with 41% of people who work in Hastings employed in this sector. Wholesale and retail trade; and accommodation and food service activities account for 27% of people who work in the county.

Our Priorities for 2012-2014

- Build clear pathways into sustainable employment for young adults in order to reduce worklessness and provide the foundation for the development of higher level skills.
- Work with partners to ensure the alignment of priorities and funding to



support young adults into sustainable employment, particularly in more deprived coastal and rural communities.

- Develop the skills base of the future adult workforce through the development of enterprise and employability skills and higher level skills to support the key sectors which will support economic growth in East Sussex during the recession and beyond.
- Reduce the number of young adults who are unemployed.
- Work with employers to improve their involvement in supporting skill development (especially higher level skills) and providing opportunities for 18-24 year olds to understand the employment opportunities in their local area.
- Increase the availability of apprenticeships, including higher apprenticeships. Improve progression routes into apprenticeships and from them into sustainable employment.
- Work with a range of partners including the private and voluntary sector to support young adults with learning difficulties or disabilities into employment.
- Create robust routes into work for all young adults, especially those who will find the transition to the workplace most challenging.

How will East Sussex County Council (ESCC) achieve these?

1. ESCC as a large local employer

- It is important for ESCC as the largest employer in the county to demonstrate excellent practice as an employer in helping young adults to secure their first step into sustainable employment.
- We will continue to offer excellent opportunities for young people within our workforce, including apprenticeships, work placements, Work Pairing and internships.
- ESCC spends approximately £350 million annually on procurement and contracting. This buying power offers

a significant opportunity to secure employability, jobs and skills through the procurement procedures, by placing specific requirements on contractors to provide work experience and apprenticeships as part of their contractual commitments.

2. Discharging our responsibility for economic development

- Engage with large employers with a strong local presence to develop sponsorship and employment opportunities for young people, and to engage them in curriculum development and delivery.
- Develop opportunities to support young adults with learning difficulties or disabilities to enter the workplace. This will include supported employment at age 19.
- Extend the successful work-readiness programmes to 18-24 year olds to ensure that young people have the best possible chance to secure apprenticeships and sustainable employment.
- Work closely with a range of partners including: Job Centre Plus, the voluntary sector and District and Borough councils along the coastal strip to improve advice, support and work placement opportunities for young adults.
- Work with partners and other services within ESCC to improve opportunities for young parents, raise aspirations and to break the cycle of worklessness which has a negative impact on the outcomes for children.
- Support the development of a Group Training Association in the construction sector based on the Build East Sussex employers' network.
- Work with partners to bid for funding and align existing funding streams to support the delivery of our priorities.

