

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY/PROTOCOL

Purpose:

Employers require a cohesive strategy by which the Learning and Skills Sector contact them.

All stakeholders in the Learning and Skills Sector need or want to contact employers at some time. This situation has been exacerbated by recent White Papers and other Government strategies, eg, 14 – 19 White Paper, the FE White Paper, The Leitch Review of Skills, Every Child Matters.

Key Players from the Learning and Skills Sector with a Duty to contact employers:

Organisation	Role
Link Ed Consortium	Primary service for links between schools and business. Umbrella organisation for Trident, Education Business Partnerships, Young Enterprise, etc.
Connexions	Information, advice, guidance and employment brokerage for young people.
14 –1 9 Agenda	Every area now has a 14-19 Planning Group which is involved in area wide development of Diplomas which relate to specific skills areas, eg, 14-19 Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment, 14-19 Diploma, 14-19 IT Diploma (emphasis on IT infrastructures and knowledge based economy not just applications)
Further Education and Work Based Learning Sectors	Vocational Skills Delivery: required under FE White Paper and The Leitch Review to have primary focus on skills for employment and related employer engagement
Higher Education Sector	Engagement of employers in Foundation Degrees. Support company development/performance by developing bespoke programmes.
Train to Gain	Government sponsored scheme to provide Skills Brokers for employers and source appropriate accredited training. First full Level 2 qualifications should be free of charge as should Skills for Life programmes (literacy/numeracy to Level 2). The emphasis is on recognised national qualifications.

In Thurrock there is a good relationship with the business and learning and skills sectors. A mapping exercise had been carried out and is accessible to everyone via the Business Forum and Learning Partnership websites.

Recent changes, as indicated above, have impacted on this with a much wider range of organisations and individuals directly contacting business in a totally unco-ordinated way, which is causing frustration and unreasonable demands on some of our most supportive companies.

To address this, the Business Association and the Learning Partnership have agreed the following principles should be adopted:

General:

1. Reference should be made by members of the learning and skills sector to the mapping exercise on business/learning and skills sector links (available on the Thurrock Learning Partnership website:
*http://www.thurrocklearningpartnership.org.uk/publication/tlp_general.htm) and take into account what links a company already has before any contact with an employer. If it is still considered appropriate to make contact with the company, it is important to acknowledge what the company **is** already doing and to evidence additional engagement is appropriate in light of existing links (eg, complementary, adding value or meeting a company need).
2. Both employers and learning and skills providers should keep the mapping exercise up to date via notification to the Learning Partnership office. Email Sally Smith at ssmith@thurrock.gov.uk
3. Where the employer is a member of Thurrock Business Association – wherever possible contact should be via the Association or the Learning Partnership.
4. If asking an employer to attend a meeting (i) consider your remit and whether it is essential for an employer to be present and (ii) the best time for the employer, eg, for some employers that could mean the end of the working day.
5. The importance of courtesy at all times. Employers are under great pressure, particularly in difficult economic climates, and are giving up their time to support the wider agenda.

Specific:

Connexions works closely with employers to raise the profile and potential benefits of employing young people aged 16-18, with the aim to offering work with training thus meeting the needs of the company and that of young people. Job coaching service matches young people to work opportunities supporting

both the employer and the young person around the transition into employment. In undertaking their work Connexions will adopt the general principles above.

Link-Ed seeks to rationalise and co-ordinate the demand from schools for employer engagement essential to meet the needs of schools to support work related learning, enterprise and vocational courses, including specialised diplomas. Businesses wishing to engage with schools can contact Link-Ed in the first instance who will seek to ensure that their commitment will be used in the most appropriate way for the widest possible benefit.

Link-Ed also undertakes to represent the views of business to schools and seeks to ensure that the work-related provision across Thurrock reflects the full range of employer needs.

It will adopt the above principles in addition to its own policy guidelines.

Further Education provides Entry through to Higher Level skills including Foundation Degrees.

It has a responsibility to promote routes and pathways to progression and employment emphasizing: the Centres of Vocational Education (CoVEs), vocational specialisms, work based Learning and Apprenticeships as well as the key skills including employability and enterprise.

Achievement of all goals is subject to funding, mainstream and bids and the ability of further education providers to engage with employers and their key role in workforce development both for the existing and emergent workforce.

Higher Education, in addition to providing higher level education and skills development, it seeks to make a contribution to economic and social development by supporting increased company performance and growing enterprise. It can do this by research and/or delivery. Programmes can be award bearing or part of continuing professional development programmes. There are also opportunities for partnership working to attract funding for both parties: employers and universities. In their work Thurrock partner universities will adopt the general principles above.

Thurrock Business Association (TBA) is a merger of Thurrock Business Forum, with whom this protocol was originally developed and Thurrock District Association of Industries. A new website for TBA is being designed. Ad interim, members of Thurrock Business Forum can be found on their original website: www.thurrockbusinessforum.org.uk and the TDAI website: www.tdai.org.uk

Members of Thurrock Learning Partnership can be found on their website: www.thurrocklearningpartnership.org.uk



Partners:

Anglia Ruskin University

Connexions

Government Office-East

Jobcentreplus

Link-Ed Consortium

Thurrock Libraries, Heritage and Cultural Services

Palmer's College

Private Sector Training Providers

Thurrock Association of Schools and Colleges

Thurrock Adult Community College

Thurrock & Basildon College

Thurrock Business Forum

Thurrock Council

Thurrock Council for Voluntary Service

Thurrock Primary Care Trust

Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation

University of East London

University of Essex