

East Suffolk Community Partnership Board
Covid Impacts Task and Finish Group Report
June 7, 2021

Introduction and Background

1. The Covid Impacts Task and Finish Group has now met four times since it was formed - in August and October 2020 and February and April 2021. At its April meeting, the group focussed on two of the four specific items agreed at the March Community Partnership Board meeting:
 - **Activity around employment support and skills development, including volunteering as a pathway to work and skills development for specific target groups**
 - Additional debt support work to supplement the SASS service offer
 - **A request for funding for the Student Life Peer to Peer Mental Health Ambassador project**
 - Package of projects to reduce frailty and vulnerability in older people at home, including through digital support
2. In terms of the other two items, work is underway at a Suffolk level through the Collaborative Communities Board to determine the future of the Suffolk Advice and Support Service and the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme and therefore it was felt that it would be better to report back to the Board on this at a future meeting. Similarly, work is ongoing with Suffolk County Council to assess and evaluate the various digital options available on the market to enable people to stay safe at home, including a pilot through the ESC Housing Service, and this will be reported back at a future meeting as well.
3. The Group therefore focussed on two key areas of activity – Employment and Skills support and the request for funding for the Student Life Peer to Peer Mental Health Ambassador project.

Employment and Skills Support

4. Appendix 1 to this report provides a wide-ranging overview of support available to help young people, adults and those aged 50+ to access employment, including the development of skills, competencies and confidence. This report has been produced in conjunction with the County and District Council Economic Development/Skills Teams.
5. Having reviewed the provision that is currently available or planned in East Suffolk it was felt that three specific project proposals could help to fill identified gaps – these all focus on employment readiness but from slightly different perspectives. Two of these were

considered in detail by the Task and Finish Group, who agreed that it would be good to include the third if an outcome proposal could be developed in time.

East Suffolk Energise Employment Support Outcome Proposal

6. The ESP allocated £20,000 to a Returners project in 2020. The aim of the project was to assist people to get back into work and to support businesses to adopt a more flexible approach to returners. The project was originally developed to secure funding from a national programme (Returners Fund) and was short listed but did not make the final round. The project was scaled back and then, just as it was about to go out for procurement, the pandemic hit so the project was put-on hold.
7. A project review has now taken place as so much has changed since the it was originally scoped. With schemes such as the Kickstart programme now in place, the Returners project needed to evolve to address the impacts of the pandemic and gaps in existing provision. Working with East Coast College, a revised project has been developed that aims to support adults in the coastal and rural areas of East Suffolk to develop skills and confidence to aid employment readiness and positive outcomes.
8. This project will provide a framework to move people who are currently not in employment, education or training into sustained employment and apprenticeships. The uniqueness of the project is that not only will it provide skills and employment training, but also supported work placements which will match students to future vacancy openings, providing the person with a gradual entry to work (with mentoring) as well as providing the employer the opportunity to see the person in the workplace and to nurture them for the future.
9. The project will provide a stepping stone for adults who are from 2 distinct groups-
 - Those that have been unemployed due to the pandemic and are now seeking a change in career, with apprenticeships or sustained employment the end goal.
 - Those who are not identified as economically inactive (by DWP) such as parents, carers and those who are now seeking employment around family commitments
10. This project will support employers to develop an adaptable workforce and will also include the following areas where possible:
 - Emerging skills such as remote working.
 - Support where jobs have a skills legacy need
 - Covid restart including core areas such as retail, care and visitor economy
 - Targeted growth in emerging businesses in the area
11. A request is being made to reallocate the original £20,000 ESP funds (match funding is still in place) to this adapted project and a further £12,000 has been secured from East Suffolk Council. The project has now expanded its target groups and addresses wider issues and therefore **requires an additional £18,000 of funding which is the request from the Community Partnership Board**. The outcome proposal attached as Appendix 2 to this report provides further detail about the project.

Volunteering Pathways Outcome Proposal

12. Participants will engage with learning to gain skills, experience, and confidence to move towards paid employment through our Volunteering Pathways programme. The programme builds on the incredible community response to Covid-19 – which saw large numbers of people involved with informal/formal volunteering. Participants with valuable skills/experience gained through informal volunteering will understand how they can transition to formal volunteering, accredited learning or paid employment. Volunteering increases the chance of employment, improves health and wellbeing and reduces feelings of loneliness/isolation.
13. Participants on the Volunteering Pathways programme will have a choice of two courses - a short course 'Introduction to Volunteering' – a virtual or face to face guided course which will cover:
 - a. What is volunteering and benefits for employment, health and wellbeing and community (5 Ways to Wellbeing)
 - b. What you offer as a volunteer,
 - c. How your strengths, skills, knowledge and experience are useful for in a volunteering role,
 - d. How to select and apply for a volunteering position.
14. The project will offer personalised brokerage to support a volunteering role that matches their skills/interests and will benefit their employment aspirations.
15. Linking with our Buddy Up project to provide a buddy to those participants that require additional support to engage with their volunteer role (perhaps to help with time keeping, transport, confidence. They will use a Community Circles approach and encourage understanding of 5 Ways to Wellbeing.
16. Support will be provided to create a Volunteer profile on Volunteer Suffolk, where volunteers will be able to apply for role, track their hours volunteering and the skills and experience gained, view their social impact and at a click of a button create a Social CV.
17. Project coordinators will assess informal participant applications to ensure it is the right learning programme. They are also the point of contact and support for the participant and their key people (i.e. employability coach, social prescribing worker, mentor, buddy etc) to ensure ongoing programme engagement.
18. Volunteer placements will be at locations accessible to the participant and support provided to ensure the host organisation covers travel costs. Support to volunteer locally will be given to help participants feel, be part of and make a difference to their community.
19. Participants will use an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) to document learning from the course, practical experience as a volunteer and life skills gained and how this relates to securing employment. Signposting to specialist employment support will be provided by the project co-ordinator e.g. those interested in Health and Social Care will be

signposted to Care Development East who provide targeted employment support. Participants will be equipped with the knowledge to find and apply for other volunteer roles to assist transition to paid employment.

20. VCSE Organisations who take participant volunteers will be expected to offer adequate support and help will be provided by CAS to upskill volunteer managers, where necessary, so the role offers the best volunteer experience. Participants will be referred/signposted to appropriate agencies for support with their employment goals.
21. The request is for **£30,827 from the Community Partnership Board**. Further detail about the project can be found in the outcome proposal attached as Appendix 3 to this report.

Ambitions to Employ Outcome Proposal

22. The third outcome proposal in relation to employment is a pilot Ambitions to Employ in East Suffolk project run by MENTA. This would enable organisations to develop their knowledge and capacity for taking on employees and those looking for work opportunities.
23. We have identified a need to support sole traders and microbusinesses to assess their readiness to employ and help them to understand the key steps to taking on their first employees. This pilot would complement the ESC Work Readiness programme and could also look to build a volunteering element into the programme that could connect with the proposed CAS Volunteering Pathways project.
24. The main elements of the offer are as follows:
 - An assessment tool for self-employed/sole traders / micro business enabling an objective assessment of readiness to employ
 - A training model with comprehensive support
 - An online resource that can be accessed by the self-employed/sole trader/ micro business
 - Ambitions to Employ will enable self-employed /micro business to hire their first employee by teaching the practical, legal and financial aspects of employment and sustainable business growth and applying new insights into overcoming the psychological barriers and risks involved.
 - A mix and match blended learning style can be used to be sure of flexibility and best use of resources.
25. The course would include 6 modules, focussing on elements such as 'When the time is right' - An introduction to understanding your readiness to hire your first employee, 'What resources you will need?' - identifying the true costs of taking on your first employee and equipping you to plan for that event, 'Attracting Talent' - up-skilling your recruitment process from using recruitment as a marketing opportunity to short-listing, interviewing, red tape & employment contracts and 'Managing Talent' - new skills to value, manage and retain talent.

26. Further detail about the project is provided in the outcome proposal attached as Appendix 4 to this report. **The request for funding from the Board is £25,000.**

Student Life Peer to Peer Health Ambassador Outcome Proposal

27. Several Board members attended a presentation given by Richard Stewart from Student life and two members of the Student Life Board, young people who had been supported through the programme. Student Life are working in several schools in Suffolk and East Suffolk to deliver a peer-to-peer programme which includes a range of participation and skills development opportunities for young people.
28. However, the Board were particularly interested in the work that Student Life have piloted at Thomas Mills around a peer-to-peer mental health ambassador programme where students are trained and supported to engage with other young people and to identify potential signs of a decline in emotional wellbeing and to work with pastoral staff to identify appropriate support.
29. The proposal attached as Appendix 4 proposes running an extended pilot in six East Suffolk schools in a mixture of locations to enable proof of concept of the Student Life model. The cost of this pilot is £3,500 per school.
30. Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG have agreed to fund 50% of the pilot in the former Suffolk Coastal area (£5,250) and therefore the outcome proposal (attached as Appendix 5 to this report) **requests £15,750 for the remaining sites**. One of the conditions attached to this funding would be the need to ensure that students and pastoral staff are aware of other related initiatives e.g. Kooth, Youth Voice and Young Healthwatch as well as the current offer from statutory services to ensure that the correct, most up to date information is provided to the peer ambassadors and their support networks in the participating schools.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) consider Appendix 1 which outlines the range of employment and skills support available in East Suffolk and identify any further potential gaps
- b) allocate £18,000 towards to Employment/Work Readiness project, in addition to the £20,000 previously agreed by the East Suffolk Partnership, set out in the outcome proposal attached as Appendix 2
- c) allocate £30,827 towards the Volunteering Pathways project set out in the outcome proposal attached as Appendix 3
- d) allocate £25,000 towards the Ambitions to Employ outcome proposal attached as Appendix 4 (a and b)
- e) allocate £15,750 towards to Student Life Peer to Peer Mental Health Ambassador programme set out in the outcome proposal attached as Appendix 5

Nicole Rickard, Head of Communities

East Suffolk Council, on behalf of the Task and Finish Group

Appendix 1

Skills and Employment Update - East Suffolk Council Economic Development Team / Suffolk County Council Skills Team / Community Action Suffolk

1. There are several new initiatives in the skills and employment world - some are national initiatives and others are more local to the NALP, Suffolk and East Suffolk areas. This update is not all encompassing but it covers some of the main current areas of activity.

Young People

2. DWP have identified a new demographic – those who have been actively employed in the past and are now facing a new uncertain future. The number of young people who have not been able to secure employment has doubled in 12 months.
3. **Kickstart** - The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to create new job placements for 16 to 24-year olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment. Employers of all sizes can apply for funding which covers 100% of the National Minimum Wage (or the National Living Wage depending on the age of the participant) for 25 hours per week for a total of 6 months, associated employer National Insurance contributions and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions. Further funding is available for training and support so that young people on the scheme can get a job in the future. More information is available at [Kickstart Scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/kickstart). Within East Suffolk, 54 employers are offering Kickstart placements (200 across Suffolk) and the number of placements is increasing. ESC is working as one of the Suffolk Partners with the Suffolk Chamber of Commerce and other local Gateways include Suffolk New College and East Coast College.
4. The current situation with young people is a real cause for concern and whilst numbers are growing for the Kickstart Initiative, there remains a small number of NEET young people that does not change despite innovative interventions.
5. **Youth Employment Service (YES)** – YES is for young people aged 16-24 in East Suffolk and is delivered by Inspire Suffolk, a registered charity. Whether it's careers advice or help building the skills young people need to be job-ready, Inspire can work with them to shape their future and explore options by providing helping them to develop employability skills and experience. Work coaches help one-to-one with advice, mentoring and new opportunities. It is funded by Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Public Sector Leaders, East Suffolk Council, East Suffolk Partnership and EDF Sizewell C.
6. The focus is on helping young people to
 - Develop life skills and confidence to tackle challenges head on
 - Find free and affordable training opportunities in Suffolk
 - Find jobs and placements that match their interests
 - Put together a winning CV and work on interview skills

Funding for YES is due to end in September 2021.

7. **ESF Youth Pledge for Employers** – NCC led project which will engage with SME employers across Norfolk and Suffolk to create new opportunities for young people in line with the New Anglia Youth Pledge. SCC will employ two FTE Business Connectors from mid-April 2021 who will be on the ground speaking to employers to support them in the creation of opportunities. A proportion of the young person may come from the 'sister' East Coast College Youth Pledge Project, called Skills Connect, and some will have additional barriers to employment such as those leaving care or already working with our Early Help Teams.
8. **Skills Connect** is an ESF project linked to the Youth Pledge, creating opportunities for young people aged 16 to 24 from across Suffolk. The project is run by East Coast College, and delivered by Access Community Trust (covering Lowestoft, Diss to Woodbridge) and The Princes Trust (covering rest of Suffolk including Woodbridge to Felixstowe). A NEET tool kit has been developed and the project operates from two Hubs in Lowestoft and Saxmundham.
9. There is a developing bid for a call (ESF Reserves) to engage young people who are vulnerable to, or at risk from **County Lines and Criminal Exploitation**, this proposal is being led by Norfolk County Council, and being supported by SCC teams including Participation, Public Health and Youth Justice. If successful it could bring around £500,000 additional funding to this important area from end of 2021–2023.
10. There is a FE College collaborative ask of NALEP for a **new NEETs call** (ESF Reserves) to help tackle capacity issues in our Further Education system and ease the potential challenge of more young people wanting to go on to college than we currently have funded places for.
11. DWP (East Suffolk wide) offer **Sector Work-based Academies Programme** (SWAP) based on a responsive training need identified by Employers to recruit to a specific sector. The SWAP is for 19 years to 25-year olds who are unemployed but ready to enter the workplace.
12. **Sizewell C: Young SZC** is a project for those aged 16-21, living in Suffolk or Norfolk, Young SZC will deliver information and access to the many career and apprenticeship opportunities across the region, as well as information and updates on the future Sizewell C project. It doesn't matter if the young people are still at school or college, in or out of the workplace.
13. **icanbea...** a website, which showcases the local economy has recently expanded its standard offering for 12- to 25-year-olds to include a free CV Wizard. This new tool is particularly relevant to young people striking out into employment as they can create a personalised CV and save it to PDF all from their phone or mobile device. In addition to this icanbea... still offers the careers wizard to explore job roles which might be of interest, posts live employment vacancies, volunteering and work experience opportunities and offers information directly from a whole range of employers via their profile pages. Full details on <https://www.icanbea.org.uk> and the team would be happy to roll out training to schools, employment projects etc.

14. A **Multi-Agency Meeting** takes place regularly in Saxmundham focussing on young people with training providers from across Suffolk. The Providers include Minding the Gap, Apprenticeship Suffolk, Princes Trust, Suffolk New College on the Coast and Halesworth Campus, The Seckford Foundation, Lapwing, Inspire Suffolk (Contractors for ESC's Youth Employment Service), Life Skills, Access Community Trust and SCC Early Help team. Some of the Providers work in partnership with East Coast College and all offer programmes with very similar aims - to grow confidence, enhance employability skills and learn new skills; whilst moving a young person, frequently with barriers, comfortably towards the job market within a timeframe acceptable to them.
15. East Suffolk Council Economic Development is represented on several labour market intelligence and skills groups including the **(IAG) Information & Advice and Guidance Group** for Educational Institutions which operates in the north of the County and covers rural Waveney. This very well represented Group has been operating for many years and is focussed on destinations of young people, NEET figures and unknowns, curriculum, STEM activities. Universities, FE Providers and Training providers, Careers and Enterprise Hub all have guest speaking slots.

Adults

16. DWP programmes offer tailored support and short, focussed interventions, mainly to help participants that are claiming benefits to compete effectively in the marketplace. New programmes offer job entry targeted support dedicated to those left jobless and out of work for 3 months, with benefits such as access to travel costs for interviews and interview clothing (post Covid-19).
17. Live for 2021 is the **Restart Scheme**. This programme is aimed at those that are out of work for longer periods and who need extra help to move into employment. This could include exploring a different growth industry such as construction or transport.
18. **National Skills Fund** - As part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, from April 2021, adults without A-Levels or equivalent will be eligible to study for a free Level 3 qualification to help boost their job prospects and get ahead in work. There are almost 400 courses on offer – from construction and agriculture, to digital and health and social care. More info [here](#).
19. **Work Well Suffolk** is a three-year ESF project (2020-2022) managed by SCC. Its aim is to help more than 2,000 people into employment by tackling barriers to work that they may face. Together with delivery partners, the project will support those aged 18+ who are unemployed / economically inactive and looking for work, those who have a long-term health condition, those with barriers to learning / employment, or those who have poor mental health / autism or learning disabilities. Participants receive support to improve engagement with education, training, improve employment opportunities, promote independence, choice and wellbeing, empowerment to remove barriers to employment and encouragement to participate in work related activities. The Work Well Suffolk Navigator for Waveney & East Suffolk is Alan Gadney on 07784 360829 alan.gadney@suffolk.gov.uk

20. **Steadfast Training is working in partnership with Work Well Suffolk** to deliver skills support for individuals affected by redundancy and those with more complex needs
21. **Supply Chain Skills Development Fund (SCSDF)** – Another Norfolk and Suffolk ESF project, led by SCC. December 2021 saw the ‘Offer letter’ and the Skills Team are now working on processes, documentation and recruitment to make the project happen with launch anticipated early summer 2021. This project is a delegated grant fund to support the development of key skills needed in many of our sector supply chains and linked to major infrastructure developments or emerging opportunities.
22. The DWP, in anecdotal conversation, has stated there are people that are no longer working due to the impact of Covid-19 but nor are they claiming benefits and this cohort could become part of a **“Returners” project** which SCC and ESC are exploring. It is likely the demographic is over 30 years plus.
23. **Apprenticeships Suffolk** is an ESF funded project delivered by SCC to support both employers in bringing forward new apprenticeship opportunities and individuals who need support to apply for the opportunities. AS has a small number of dedicated staff who cover the whole of Suffolk. For full information they have a website <https://apprenticeshipssuffolk.org>
24. **Skills, Progression, Adaptability and Resilience (SPAR) Programme - Pathways Training Fund (Supporting in-work adults to upskill)** - ESF bid submitted in Dec 2020 and under appraisal, if successful we anticipate starting in autumn 2021. The Pathways Training Fund will aim to provide a grant to employers to help them pay for training for staff. We anticipate funding approx. 860 individuals in line with:
- Demand-led themes and flexible support pot for individuals to subsidise training identified by employers to directly promote agility and resilience in their business.
 - Direct grants of up to £500 per employee (£3000 per employer) for discretionary training which clearly demonstrates employer need, agility and resilience in the workplace.
 - Cross-sector training provision focused on agility and resilience, progression in work, aligned to sector skills plan and emerging post CV19 need, with key themes:
 - a. Digital and Industry 4.0
 - b. Leadership and Management
 - c. Health and Wellbeing of staff
 - d. Project Management,
 - e. Change Management
 - f. Customer Service Skills
 - g. Flexible Fund
25. East Coast College offers the **Adult Retrain Reskill and Restart** for the Great Yarmouth & Waveney NEET population and **Routes to Work**. Many courses are available for adults to access online and while on furlough. Free courses include clean growth and sectors that are difficult to recruit to such as health and social care.
26. Adult learning offers a pathway to employment, improved job prospects and social inclusion. It provides a second chance to those who are disadvantaged, isolated and

need to improve their skills to secure work and participate fully in their community. The **Adult Learning Contract** is held by SCC (£2.83m per annum). This contract enables the Council to have strategic oversight of the delivery of literacy, numeracy and digital courses as well as mental health recovery, provision for adults with learning disabilities and family learning.

27. The overarching ambition for Suffolk's Adult Learning Service is to maximise adult participation in high quality skills and community learning to achieve economic growth, full employment, social inclusion, community cohesion, health and wellbeing. At present all delivery is subcontracted to local providers, the main provider being Realise Futures, the others are local community learning providers who are supporting very specific local needs. The Service's new website was launched in January 2021 to widen the reach: [LearnSuffolk.org](https://www.learnSuffolk.org)

50+ Adults

28. **Skills, Progression, Adaptability and Resilience (SPAR) Programme - Pathways 50+ (work placements for the over 50s)** - ESF bid submitted in Dec 2020 and under appraisal, if successful we anticipate starting in autumn 2021. Pathways 50+ will aim to support SME employers to create placements for over 50s
- Incentives for SME and Micro businesses to offer employment support for over 50s returning to work (currently out of work).
 - Like the Kickstart scheme, salary contribution will be paid directly to employers who offer job placements
 - Participants will undertake placements – including work experience, mentoring and interview experience.
 - Pathways 50+ will empower and support individuals to progress through a placement into full-time employment including apprenticeships.
 - Participants will receive wraparound IAG and ongoing support delivery.
29. Given the emergence of new national initiatives in this area, SCC want to work with districts and boroughs to shape and promote this programme and participate on the stakeholder group. They plan to use learning from Fuller Working Lives to inform the development of the project.
30. The LEP is piloting a new project with SMEs called **"Fuller Working Lives"** which is aimed at retaining staff over the age of 50 years by providing the Employer with a tool kit to provide tools to retain, retrain and recruit an older workforce with a focus on skills, health and financial planning, as well as upskilling to meet the requirements of the job role (ESC is one of the participating LA's in the Pilot). The project also focusses on developing a business case for older workers by raising awareness amongst employers on the benefits of older workers and the skills and experience that they contribute, understand why these employees may exit the workforce prematurely and how to address potential issues.

Other

31. Employers are key in offering work placements and experience to both the DWP's clients and those providers that work alongside young people. Investment in growth in East Suffolk in both clean growth and infrastructure will play a major role in providing work experience, apprenticeships and ultimately a move into sustainable employment. The social value element of the supply chain and the Tier 1 Employers should be maximised and perhaps consideration should be given to "trial days or pre apprenticeships" with emerging sectors.
32. **Gull Wing Bridge** - the construction of the Gull Wing has now started and ESC, SCC and other regional stakeholders, are working with Farrans to maximise the skills and employment outcomes of the build. Commitments in the developing Skills and Employment Plan will include:
- a minimum of 10 formal apprenticeship positions working on the construction project with 8 out of the 10 posts for people from Suffolk or Norfolk
 - work placements for people from local schools, colleges and in further education
 - work opportunities for individuals not in education
 - work opportunities for local people who are economically or socially disadvantaged
 - a programme of school engagement
33. There are also a number of **existing ESF funded projects** still delivering employment and skills support across our area, these are monitored by New Anglia LEP and project info and contact details are available for each project on [this webpage](#).
34. **Growth Hub Skills Portal** – this resource is there to help employers or those working with them find skills related opportunities. The site is a tool for any 'employer engagement' staff to use to promote the full range of initiatives available. Content can be added or amended on request, with SCC Skills being the contact for Suffolk.
35. For those individuals looking to start-up businesses MENTA provides a fully funded **Business Start Up package** and NWES provides **1st steps to Start Up**.

Ambitions to Employ

36. Discussions are underway with Menta about a project called Ambitions to Employ. This project supports getting people into employment from a different angle as it addresses the barriers from the employer side. This could complement the ECC college project well and should this progress a further outcome proposal may be presented to a future meeting.

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