

Real Help Now: Keeping the South East Working

South East Joint Regional Recovery Plan (JCP, LSC, SEEDA)

Executive Summary

March 2009

In the current economic downturn ensuring business and individuals have access to employment and skills advice and practical assistance is a priority in the region and JCP, LSC and SEEDA, supported by the Government Office for the South East, are working together to provide and signpost, employers and individuals to this support.

The Regional Recovery Plan, produced early in 2009, sets out how SEEDA, LSC and JCP are working together with Business Link, Sector Skills Councils and other agencies in the region, as a single team, to respond effectively and rapidly to the business, employment and skills challenges faced by business and individuals and to simplify access to the support available.

This summary outlines the content and key features of the plan.

Objectives and principles

The key partners are working proactively to reduce on-going multiple employment risks across the region and to respond rapidly to major redundancies. Individuals and businesses will benefit from clear signposting to the business, skills and employment support available to them such as workforce development, retraining, benefits and financial support and finding new jobs. The aim is to help employers continue trading through the downturn and where this is not possible, to provide the support and advice to prepare people to work with other employers.

Key to this is developing and implementing:

- a simple, unified plan which integrates the totality of the response to the business, employment and skills aspects of the economic downturn by key stakeholders: JCP, LSC and SEEDA
- support for businesses and individuals, primarily through single points of contact
- models of delivery which build on those already in place
- high levels of coordination and communication between partners
- a clear offer which responds to identified needs, provides flexible services and avoids duplication
- proactive work with businesses to avoid redundancy situations as well as rapid response work
- strong partnership working, at regional and local level

Partnership working

The plan sets out the management structure for the response to the downturn and the focus and importance.

Partnership working is at the core of the response to the downturn. Key partners, at regional level include JCP, LSC and SEEDA, working closely with Business Link, nextstep and Sector Skills Councils.

Strategic responsibility for the plan rests with the Regional Recovery Task Group which reports to the South East Economic Delivery Council, with the operation and development of the plan sitting with the Regional Recovery Implementation Group.

Partners endorsed the strategic direction, principles and priorities within the plan in early 2009 and the focus now is on taking the plan forward.

At a local level the partnerships will, importantly, involve local authorities, economic and other sub regional partnerships, service providers such as training and community organisations and the third sector.

At both the regional and sub regional level the principles behind partnership working include

- Jointly gathering and disseminated intelligence
- Joined up support (regional and local)
- Focus on single points of contact for businesses and individuals
- seamless customer journeys
- Empowered and informed the front line
- Regular communication
- Processes to Identify and support barriers and gaps
- Proactive support for surviving businesses

Business, employment and skills intelligence

An important element of the plan is ensuring that relevant information and intelligence is gathered and disseminated to help partners develop appropriate responses. This work is being taken forward through:

- Partners working together to produce regular economic bulletins at regional and sub regional level
- A joint and dedicated resource to focus on labour market intelligence
- Joint research such as current work on the impact of the recession on sectors of the economy

Business support

The plan sets out the business support being established in the region. This is focused on a package of measures aimed at improving business viability and assisting with specific issues, e.g. finance, marketing and workforce development. It is aimed at three main groups of businesses:

- Those facing financial/other difficulties
- Those making redundancies
- Those requiring further support

Support is focused through:

- SEEDA funded Investor Development teams who provide overall support for larger companies on business and product development, employment and skills related issues and financial matters
- Business Link, which provides in depth support, often for SMEs, to identify actions and solutions to address challenges

- The Continuing Employment Support Service (CESS) which provides a range of tailored support where redundancies are identified, in liaison with other partners such as JCP and training providers
- Train to Gain (incl. new flexibilities), support for skills based training for employers
- Apprenticeships opportunities, especially for the 16-24 age range
- Training providers, including FE colleges, provide a range of upskilling and retraining services including Train to Gain, Apprenticeships and mainstream and project funded opportunities
- Local Employment Partnerships, which provide opportunities for companies to work more closely with JCP
- JCP Rapid Response Service provides skills training analysis, job focussed training and an action fund to support the CESS activities
- Employment and Skills Boards and other partnership groups
- Other regional support – e.g. South East Skills Challenge, SSC led sector initiatives and local task force developments

Individual support

The support in the plan sets out who partners are responding to individuals who are:

- at threat of, or experiencing, redundancy.
- newly redundant
- seeking work
- requiring ongoing support
- young people, including those preparing for employment

Support is focused through:

- Benefit claims processes including rapid reclaim and rapid responses processes where needed
- The CESS which provides employees with vacancy information, job search support and benefits advice
- Pre employment programmes which provide customised programmes to build employability and vocational skills, including basic skills
- Enhanced adult Information, Advice and Guidance (via next step) which provides individual and group support for adults and includes the Skills Health Check
- Training provision including through Train to Gain, mainstream and project funded provision and Apprenticeships, which is mainly qualification based vocational training
- Other education and training provision such as that available from HE organisations
- Local support e.g. Jobclubs and open sessions
- Supporting young people as they prepare for employment and Apprentices who may need support to find alternative employment.

Plan implementation

Over the first three months of the plan the focus is on setting up and testing appropriate support structures and services including:

- Running walk through and briefing sessions at regional and local level to test out and coordinate the processes and maximise

- Mapping pre employment provision to ensure coordination and to avoid duplication, and to identify gaps and barriers to take up
- Flexing provision and procuring additional provision including increasing pre employment training support
- Producing joint communications under the “Keeping the SE Working” banner
- Briefing local partners – including developing the local offer
- Working locally, especially with local authorities, providers, next step
- Aligning the response to the downturn with other developments such as the roll out of the Integrated Employment and Skills service
- Establishing, usually at a local level, rapid response/task groups to respond to large scale redundancies
- Identifying and responding to longer term trends e.g. companies/sectors with growth potential

Challenges and issues

- Understanding the complete redundancy picture e.g. job losses in small and medium sized business which fall outside the BERR radar and those resulting from out of area redundancies
- Supporting higher skilled professionals and others not attending the JCP network
- Meeting the needs of all - hardest to help and newly redundant
- Communicating effectively the rapidly changing offer
- Maximising available resources e.g. local partners; flexing mainstream provision and alignment
- Taking forward Welfare Reform
- Responding rapidly and effectively to larger scale redundancies
- Better understanding and responding to the impact of the recession on young people
- Increasing our focus and engagement with the public sector especially around LEPs
- Introducing new and flexed programmes... and fill them
- Rolling out the Integrated Employment and Skills service
- Producing smarter labour market intelligence
- Responding to the changing policy and partnership landscape
- Establishing reporting mechanisms and impact measures