

# THE SOUTH EAST EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS ACCORD, 2008

between South East England Development Agency, the Learning & Skills Council SE, and Jobcentre Plus SE

## Our Commitment

We are committed to working together towards developing an employment and skills system which is simpler, better integrated and able to deliver the skills and jobs needed to succeed in the 21st Century global economy. As architects of this Accord, we will actively seek Local Authorities, the Health Service and other national, regional and local funding agencies to join us as partners in putting our commitment into practice. Our aim is for the South East to be at the **forefront** of integrating employment and skills services to support welfare reform and productivity agendas.

To achieve this we will increasingly place purchasing power in the hands of individuals and employers, giving them the choice to determine what training they want, and where. At the same time, we will increasingly customise our programmes better to meet the needs of different groups of people requiring upskilling and/or employability support.

We will draw and build on the experience and emerging good practice from, for example, the *40-70 Tomorrow's Workforce* programme in the SE for older workers and employers, Local Employment Partnerships, Skills Account trials, the new adult advancement and careers service and sub-regional employment and skills strategies.

## Our focus and actions in the next 24 months. We will:

1. **ESTABLISH SHARED SUCCESS MEASURES** Shared success measures will 'glue together' individual agency targets and seek to maximise achievement of them. They will monitor **the added value** of integrated working between Agencies and providers, and linking together different programmes and strands of support, in improving the effectiveness of services delivered to individuals and employers and its impact in helping to increase achievement of Government targets.

Between these shared success measures, individual Agencies will continue to measure the acquisition of skills and employment for unemployed people and the acquisition of skills for employees, self-employed and young people. We will also include business improvement targets under the umbrella of the shared success measures.

### Our approach

- Identify how to align employment and skills targets and a way that *incentivises collaboration* by the frontline staff working for different Agencies and providers to achieve the region's shared goal of improving the productivity of the workforce by an average of 2.4% annually and increasing economic activity from 82% to 85% by 2016.
- Agree shared success measures and how they will be monitored.
- Make the case for the South East to conduct one or more of the *groundbreaking commissioning trials* by which the Government intends to develop and test new success measures with providers, building on approaches in the integrated employment and skills service trials.
- Work together to *draw up contract specifications* that focus services on the shared success measures of sustained employment and progression, joint performance management and provider capability arrangements.

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- Plan and implement *a Co-Commissioning and Investment Strategy* to bring together the commissioning of, and investment in core employment and skills services, such as flexible New Deal, Train to Gain and Apprenticeships with the objective, in the medium term, of bringing on board a wider range of partners including health, childcare and youth services.

2. **CREATE MULTI-AGENCY WORK TEAMS** to implement the Accord. The teams will operate sub-regionally to ensure that Agency-led initiatives, such as the LSC's Skills Account trial and Jobcentre Plus' Local Employer Partnerships are situated within the overall regional plan, and to take a cross-agency responsibility for implementing the Accord.

### Our approach

- Initially, *create sub-regional multi-agency teams in at least two sub-regions*. In these two sub-regions we are committed to helping to devolve responsibility from central government to local areas to develop their own solutions, based on Multi-Area Agreements (MAAs) between groups of Local Authority areas and putting employers at the heart of the employment and skills system.
- Members of each sub-regional team will be responsible for both *implementing the Accord and championing it* within their individual Agencies.
- The head of each of the Agencies will provide *high profile leadership* in taking forward cultural and operational changes within each Agency that sub-regional joint working may require for it to be successful.
- We will also prioritise introducing multi-agency teams to *work with Local Authorities*, particularly those that have Working Neighbourhoods Fund areas with high levels of worklessness and deprivation, to tackle low levels of skills and enterprise in their communities through new integrated approaches.
- Alongside the establishment of front-runner multi-agency teams, we will carry out extensive local and sectoral consultation on *creating fit for purpose infrastructures* for integrating employment and skills in different sub-regions that recognise the work of Local Employment Partnerships, Local Skills for Productivity Alliances, sub-groups of Local Strategic partnerships, and local Employment and Skills Boards. Included in this consultation would be Local Authorities, Chambers, Business Links, T2G Brokerage, Sector Skills Councils regional representatives, and employers.

3. **REVIEW FUNDING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES** where there is evidence that existing policies and procedures are creating a barrier to integration of employment and skills progression routes. This agreement will include persuading sponsor Departments and relevant Ministers of the case for changing practice if it is standing in the way of integrating services.

### Our approach

- We will collect evidence from the sub-regional multi-agency working groups on operational, funding or audit barriers or disincentives for staff to establish integrated systems. Where it is within our authority we will remove these barriers. If the power to do so lies outside of our authority, we will ensure that a case is made for change.

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4. **BE INCLUSIVE AND RESPONSIVE TO EMERGING NATIONAL, REGIONAL & LOCAL POLICIES** It is our intent to include emerging national, regional and local policies within an integrated employment and skills system. It will, therefore, be an evolving system. We view mainstream employment and skills programmes as the building blocks. The system provides the plan to ensure that the 'blocks' don't sit in silos but enables the construction of individualised pathways within an overall architecture that integrates employment and skills programmes and services.

### Our approach

- Bring under the umbrella of an integrated skills and employment infrastructure new national policy commitments highlighted in the recent Work Skills Command Paper. This will include working towards ensuring that:
  - all young adults who do not go to university have access to a range of vocational entitlements up to Level 3;
  - a young person's first Level 3 training is free to the individual and their employer;
  - it is easier to study for vocational qualifications in ways that suit learners and their employers;
  - people receive credits for completing units of qualifications so that their achievements are recorded and are transferable;
  - Skills for Life (literacy and numeracy) provision is refreshed, making employability skills a priority.
- Test and refine ways of giving everyone access to new Skills Accounts through trials in urban South Hampshire and Slough from August 2008. As part of these trials, test ways of using Skills Accounts through a new adult advancement and careers service which will include skills health checks to assess individual needs against job requirements and personal aspirations to enable adults to gain access to Level 3 programmes and to provide associated financial support, for example to help with childcare cost.
- Make effective use of pre employment training to support Jobcentre Plus led Local Employment Partnerships ensuring jobseekers are prepared and upskilled to meet the needs of employers, while continuing to develop and upskill the workforce through Train to Gain and access to Skill Accounts
- Work with Government Office South East and the Department of Health to position their forthcoming Fit for Work pilots within an overall integrated system of employment and skills.
- Integrate the Train to Gain skills brokerage service (Skills South East) with Business Link from April 2009
- Ensure all agencies are working together to promote each others services to employers giving simplified access to a wide range of business and skills support.

Jobcentre Plus, SE

South East England Development  
Agency

Learning & Skills Council, SE