



# Suffolk Growth Officer workshop: A future ready workforce & supporting our businesses.

## Workshop summary report: 12 March 2021

### Overview

Suffolk Growth Partnership (SG) facilitated a workshop focused on support for both our own workforce & the workforce for Suffolk businesses to ensure they are future ready. SG joined with key partners, including our council HR teams, Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, the University of Suffolk and the East of England Local Government Association, with the aim of developing a series of short-term actions that can be implemented across the public sector.

This paper provides a summary of the workshop and presents a short term action plan.

Suffolk Growth Partnership and represented organisations will use the workshop outputs to develop and inform future work programmes.

A full list of attendees can be found at the end of this report.

### Presentations

The workshop format was:

- Introductory survey questions via Mentimeter
- Opening presentation: *The gift of COVID- progress, learning and challenges* - Michelle Kirk, East of England Local Government Association Director.
- Breakout sessions (attendees chose one session)
  - *The role of education in growth* – led by Gurpreet Jagpal, Pro Vice-Chancellor Business and Entrepreneurship University of Suffolk, & Rachel Bunn, Assistant Principal Curriculum and Quality East Coast College.
  - *Skills for our young people (<25)* – led Michael Gray, Head of Skills, Suffolk County Council.
- Panel discussion / Q&A: supporting workforce development - the view of public & private sector - local authority HR leads & Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
- Re-run of Mentimeter survey
- Summary & next steps

Presentations from the workshop are available as a PDF and has been appended to this note.

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Mentimeter survey

The results from the mentimeter survey are shown below.

Question	Feedback pre-workshop	Feedback after-workshop
Who is responsible for skills & workforce development in Suffolk?	<p>A word cloud showing responses to the question 'Who is responsible for skills &amp; workforce development in Suffolk?' before the workshop. The most prominent words are 'Everyone', 'Employers', 'Education', 'Government', 'Local', 'County', 'Suffolk', 'Individuals', 'Council', 'LEP', 'providers', 'authorities', 'Colleges', 'University', 'Government', 'agencies', 'sector', 'development', 'Chamber', 'All', 'partnership', 'Public', 'together', 'HR', 'Placemaking', 'Training', 'Working', 'Workers', 'approach', 'Collective', 'bodies', 'Commerce', 'Districts', 'skills', 'staff', 'Private', 'individual', 'Lots', 'professional', 'working', 'approach', 'Collective', 'bodies', 'Commerce', 'Districts', 'skills', 'staff', 'Private', 'individual', 'Lots', 'professional', 'working'.</p>	<p>A word cloud showing responses to the question 'Who is responsible for skills &amp; workforce development in Suffolk?' after the workshop. The most prominent words are 'All', 'Everyone', 'Individuals', 'Employers', 'Education', 'Sector', 'Employment', 'Working', 'Providers', 'Key', 'Agencies', 'Stakeholders', 'Together', 'Collaboration', 'Public', 'Private', 'HR', 'School', 'Workers', 'Working', 'Employment', 'Sector', 'Stakeholders', 'Together', 'Agencies', 'Collaboration'.</p>

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<p>How well are the options for skills and workforce development within Suffolk:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promoted</li> <li>2. Understood</li> <li>3. Accessed</li> </ol>	<p>Average scores provided (0= not at all &amp; 10= very well)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Promoted: 5</b></li> <li>2. <b>Understood: 4.6</b></li> <li>3. <b>Accessed: 4.6</b></li> </ol>	<p>Average scores provided (0= not at all &amp; 10= very well)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Promoted: 5.6</b></li> <li>2. <b>Understood: 4.8</b></li> <li>3. <b>Accessed: 5.3</b></li> </ol>
<p>From the list, please rank the top issues you think will affect Suffolk's workforce in the future</p>	<p>Average scores provided (0= least impact &amp; 10= biggest impact). Top 3 issues highlighted.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Digital skills: 8</b></li> <li>2. <b>Support for wellbeing: 6.9</b></li> <li>3. <b>Flexible approaches to work locations: 7.2</b></li> <li>4. <b>Low wages: 5.9</b></li> <li>5. <b>Management and leadership abilities: 6.6</b></li> <li>6. <b>Flexible and agile approaches to contracts of employment: 7</b></li> <li>7. <b>The image of public sector: 5</b></li> <li>8. <b>Pay freezes: 4.9</b></li> </ol>	<p>Average scores provided (0= least impact &amp; 10= biggest impact). Top 3-4 issues highlighted.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Digital skills: 7.4</b></li> <li>2. <b>Support for wellbeing: 7.4</b></li> <li>3. <b>Flexible approaches to work locations: 7.4</b></li> <li>4. <b>Low wages: 4.5</b></li> <li>5. <b>Management and leadership abilities: 7.8</b></li> <li>6. <b>Flexible and agile approaches to contracts of employment: 6.8</b></li> <li>7. <b>The image of public sector: 5</b></li> <li>8. <b>Pay freezes: 4.4</b></li> </ol>

## Breakout groups

A summary of the key issues from the Breakout groups is given below.

The role of education in growth	Skills for young people (>25)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Universities &amp; colleges need to be bold in approach – outward looking and test global best practice.</li> <li>➤ Educational frameworks need to accommodate business led approach               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Respond to local need &amp; engage with businesses early in journey.</li> <li>○ Reflect diversity of need– SMEs through to Tier 1s – Tier 1s can otherwise dominate the conversation.</li> <li>○ Balance of generic skills &amp; those that are sector specific.</li> <li>○ Flexibility in learning approaches is required</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Work with businesses to support recruitment without qualifications and then develop staff through on the job training – “grow your own”</li> <li>➤ Evaluation of training funding – linked to performance &amp; delivery. Businesses should be involved in monitoring – a mature conversation on outcomes, not just activity / outputs.</li> <li>➤ Need to encourage delivery of programmes addressing softer skills / develop entrepreneurial programmes to reach audiences that may not automatically feel comfortable in formal education</li> <li>➤ Not one single model that works for all – pre-employment, upskilling, transferable skills, core skills e.g. cross sector skills in energy or other sectors.</li> <li>➤ Develop skills programmes that focus on long term attainment, not a specific job role</li> <li>➤ Inclusive approach is needed – one that recognises the value of higher-level qualifications along with accredited skills programmes. Behavioural change alongside delivery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Confidence building of young people: young people need to be recognised by experienced colleagues and given opportunities</li> <li>➤ In-work young people need to inspire other young people through the use of digital media – short, snappy messages</li> <li>➤ Need to use the opportunity we have working virtually to engage with schools and education centres more proactively – including work experience to reach a larger number of young people but overcome how to provide the same support</li> <li>➤ More entry level apprenticeships needed</li> <li>➤ Need to be exemplars and strengthen the relationships internally as well as externally to maximise social value as important to continue with initiatives and selling benefits</li> <li>➤ Need to do more to tailor to particular groups (eg, SEND, care leavers) including practical support (eg, bus fare) and making the workplace less intimidating</li> <li>➤ Need to balance specific skills training with general employability skills – including softer, entrepreneurial skills (SBK)</li> <li>➤ Young people need advice and experience – careers guidance and work placements.</li> <li>➤ Experienced colleagues to become more respectful and show recognition for the young workforce</li> <li>➤ We need to promote what roles are available in our major infrastructure projects that aren’t construction and engineering, e.g. catering, management, procurement</li> </ul>



## Panel discussion

Key points raised during the question & answer panel: supporting workforce development - the view of public sector HR & the private - local authority HR leads & Suffolk Chamber of Commerce:

- Several online / physical resources and programmes are available to support businesses, workplaces and staff with improving physical and mental wellbeing at work. These should be reviewed, updated and aligned where necessary to share best practice and provide up to date, tailored support for the range of workplaces in Suffolk.
- It was noted that apprentices within public sector have started their apprenticeship during lockdown and home working have stepped-up and lead by example and we should not underestimate their abilities with the right support.
- Management staff need support in how to help their staff / teams with mental wellbeing – what training can we jointly deliver? We also need to build this into regular staff personal development plans and 1-1 reviews.
- Public sector has the opportunity in covid-19 to lead by example on how to achieve ‘good quality’ work-life balance while maintaining, improving, productivity. How do we measure this?

## Short term actions

The following table of actions has been drawn up based on the discussions at the workshop and within the breakout groups. Suffolk Growth will engage with partners on these actions and monitor delivery. A follow up report and further workshop will be arranged for March 2022.

Action	Lead organisation (s) to work with Suffolk Growth	Timeline / next steps
<p><b>Supporting young people to gain employability skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support existing local authority apprentices (e.g. Level 3 planning cohort) with workshops on employability &amp; CV development</li> </ul>	HR leads, development industry, relevant managers	Initial workshop planned for May / June 2021, additional sessions to follow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Broaden engagement with the Young Apprentice Ambassador Network (YAAN) and identify areas of further support for their work in promoting apprenticeship routes with businesses &amp; with upcoming investment opportunities (e.g. infrastructure projects, green economy)</li> </ul>	SCC Skills, Suffolk Chamber	6-9 months

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<p><b>Improving mental health and wellbeing of our workforce:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review existing online / other resources to support mental and physical wellbeing at work including: <i>Building a Resilient County</i>, work of EELGA “subject experts” and others to ensure they are up to date, accessible and utilised by our businesses / workforce &amp; public sector managers</li> <li>- Development of best practice case studies that could be used within workplace training packages for management teams</li> </ul>	<p>Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, Suffolk Public Health, EELGA</p> <p>University of Suffolk</p>	<p>3-6 months</p> <p>9 months</p>
<p><b>Supporting specific skill areas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Map &amp; gap” exercise on digital skills programmes to be prepared and tested with FE/HE partners &amp; business community / key sectors (volume of provision / nature of provision / content e.g. direct skills, building confidence in digital use)</li> <li>- Support FE/HE strategic approaches to develop education, skills &amp; training offers in Suffolk and jointly engage with businesses / sectors to build the Suffolk brand – including the development of scenarios to test demand / supply</li> <li>- Consider a Suffolk wide business survey, completed on an annual basis, to establish business needs &amp; greatest impact of public sector support</li> </ul>	<p>SCC Skills team / NALEP / wider partners (e.g. communities teams)</p> <p>University of Suffolk / SCC Skills team</p> <p>Suffolk Growth / all</p>	<p>3 months – 1 year</p> <p>6 months – 1 year</p> <p>Aim to issue first survey in Summer 2021</p> <p>Initial conversations have started, link in with Covid recovery work &amp; wider business engagement, e.g. Suffolk Climate Emergency Plan (SCEP)</p>



Please visit the following websites for further information on the work of Suffolk Growth.

[www.suffolkgrowth.co.uk](http://www.suffolkgrowth.co.uk)

Thank you for attending, please refer any queries to: [info@suffolkgrowth.co.uk](mailto:info@suffolkgrowth.co.uk)

### Suffolk Growth representatives

Name	Organisation
Karen Chapman	Suffolk Growth Partnership
Kay Bonning-Schmitt	Suffolk Growth Partnership
Richard Hunt	Suffolk Growth Partnership

### Attendees

Name	Organisation
Andrea Mayley	West Suffolk Council
Andy Walker	Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
Anette Gilham	Ipswich Borough Council
Carol Lower	East Suffolk Council
Caroline Davison	Suffolk County Council
Cheryl Willis	East Suffolk Council
Gareth Davies	Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
Gurpreet Jagpal	University of Suffolk
Heather Shilling	East Suffolk Council
Jai Raitthatha	Suffolk County Council
Jenni Carberry	University of Suffolk
Jo Wood	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Michael Chapman	Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
Michael Gray	Suffolk County Council
Michaela Breilmann	Suffolk Office of Data Analytics
Michelle Gordon	Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils
Michelle Kirk	East of England Local Government Association

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Nick Clow	East Suffolk Council
Paul Simon	Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
Rachel Bunn	East Coast College
Rhiannon Henley	Suffolk County Council
Tony Bush	Active Suffolk

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