

Brighton and Hove City Council

**City Employment and Skills Plan
Mid-term Evaluation**

Interim Report

prepared by

**Rubicon Regeneration
11 Mallory Road
HOVE
East Sussex BN3 6TB**

**www.rubiconregen.com
david@rubiconregen.com
01273 726342
07855 418076**



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The City Employment and Skills Plan (CESP) has as its ambitious mission “the creation of a coherent and coordinated approach to employment and skills, which will benefit the residents of Brighton and Hove and strengthen the city’s economy”.

In September 2008, Brighton and Hove City Council, with the CESP Working Group, commissioned Rubicon Regeneration, in partnership with Arad Consulting, to undertake a mid-term evaluation of the City Employment and Skills Plan.

Although in its infancy – the CESP was launched in December 2007 - the Mid-term evaluation is seen as providing an important context and framework for the future development of the CESP specifically in terms of:

- assessing the impacts of partner actions in achieving targets set out under the four strategic priorities,
- identifying areas of good practice and
- making recommendations regarding future monitoring and measuring of activities and performance.

The Mid-term evaluation is critical in terms of assessing the impact of the CESP and specifically partner activities in support of the plan. This is essential to improve project performance, achieving best value for money from public resources, improve decision-making and partner working and learn lessons.

1.2 The Brief

The focus of the work is threefold:

- To review performance and impact of the CESP, specifically in terms of partner commitment and early actions;
- To establish a robust framework for monitoring and on-going evaluation of the CESP to 2011, and
- To assess the infrastructure to support delivery of the CESP.

1.3 Interim report

The Interim Report is based on desk research and an extensive programme of consultation. (Appendix 1 shows the organisations consulted during this initial phase and Appendix 2 outlines the consultation ‘template’ in terms of issues covered.) Importantly, it provides an understanding of the relevance and continued commitment to the CESP among partners and stakeholders as well as a commentary on the impact of current projects and priorities. Clearly, as the plan is still in its infancy, the review of projects provides a snap-shot of performance as opposed to an in-depth analysis of impact.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the CESP, including an analysis of external (and internal) factors that will influence future employment and skills interventions;

Chapter 3 summarises the main comments made regarding strategic objectives and priorities set out within the CESP;

Chapter 4 provides a general review of performance, including a suggested framework for future evaluation, and

Chapter 5 summarises the main economic challenges and priorities facing the city that need to be addressed in the future action plan.

2. City Employment Skills Plan (CESP) Review

2.1 Background

In broad terms, the CESP was prepared at a time when the local economy was experiencing a period of growth. With an annual GDP of £3.7 billion¹, the city's economy continued to flourish and was seen as key driver of the South East coastal economy. The strengths and prospects for the city's economy is based on its position as an international business and tourist destination, a steady increase in business and financial services and a growing, high-value creative industries sector.

The city benefits from the two well-established universities that provide an attractive source of graduate labour and world class research facilities.

Much of the future prospects of the city's economy was based on an estimated £2 billion investment in over twenty infrastructure projects that were projected to bring new investment, jobs, homes, community facilities, leisure and retail opportunities to all parts of the city. Many of the capital projects being planned are designed to ensure that more modern, environmentally friendly and technologically up-to-date premise will come on stream in the near future.

Although the city economy was growing, the CESP was prepared in an attempt to address a number of current and projected challenges:

- Finding sufficient jobs for the increasing number of working age people
- Providing better paid jobs (average earnings in the city are below the national average)
- Addressing economic inactivity (there are under 20,000 people who are not in work, but who would like a job)
- Addressing skills development at all levels

¹ Brighton & Hove Business Directory 2007-2008

As outlined in the CESP, the most pressing issue is the need to create sufficient jobs to support the city's growing working population and to ensure that these are of sufficient value-added so that the highly qualified resident population is better employed in more productive activities.

The initial focus of the Plan, best demonstrated in the priority actions, has been on designing and better co-ordinating the delivery of social welfare interventions to tackle worklessness, inequality and disadvantage.

In many respects, the over-riding objective of the CESP was to bring together the key strategic partners from across Brighton and Hove to better co-ordinated the design and delivery of employment and skills interventions to meet current and future needs.

2.2 Continued relevance of CESP

There is agreement that the CESP report provides an excellent review and analysis of the context, issues and future employment and skills challenges facing the city.

During our consultations with members of the City Employment and Skills Steering Group (CESSG), we discussed the continued relevance of CESP to their organisations as a strategic plan for employment and skills. The overwhelming response was that CESP is still seen as being vitally important in leading to improve coordination of employment and skills services and interventions. This was re-affirmed at the CESSG meeting, which took place at Stanmer House in November, where there was unanimous support for the need for co-ordinating approaches to tackle employment and skills issues. Indeed, SEEDA highlighted CESP as being a regional "model of good practice".

CESP continues to be extremely relevant particularly in providing a clear picture of the employment and skills challenges facing the city. The CESP has provided a framework for re-focusing actions and priorities on current and future challenges (particularly the need to create high end jobs).

2.3 Collaboration and 'buy-in'

The consensus is that preparation and delivery against the strategic priorities set out within the CESP is leading to improved coordination of employment and skills services. CESP is helping to bring agencies together: "integrating employment and skills delivery". Although still at an early stage, CESP is improving partnership working amongst service providers. This is apparent on a number of levels:

- CESP provides a shared vision, context and route map for improved partnership working;
- The support infrastructure, specifically the CESSG, provides an important forum for discussion, debate and joint action, and
- CESP has helped to build the capacity among front-line delivery staff, particularly by providing a common understanding about 'who does what'.

Although the CESP hasn't changed the way partner organisations work, it is beginning to influence planning of future activities (including lobbying) and opening up future collaboration opportunities.

There is a clear distinction between local city-wide partners and national / regional partners, such as Job Centre Plus, particularly regarding programme flexibility and the ability of bend or modify mainstream programmes to meet employment and skills needs of the city. CESP has been more successful in securing ownership and commitment from local partners in the city (as opposed to sub regional / regional / national partners).

There is recognition about the role and contribution made by the third sector towards the economic and social prosperity of the city. *Taking Account: A Social and Economic Audit of the Third Sector in Brighton and Hove* (September 2008) demonstrates the social and economic importance of the third sector in Brighton and Hove. Based on the audit:

- Approximately 8,000 people work in the third sector in Brighton and Hove (about 50% of these employees live in the city);
- Estimates suggest that the third sector contributes about £96 million to the Brighton and Hove economy each year.

The third sector is particularly well-placed to engage and support those people who are furthest away from the labour market. As set out within the CESP, and reinforced during discussions with stakeholders, a balance is needed between providing community based support services (and developing employment opportunities in local neighbourhoods) with encouraging people to seek opportunities across the city and beyond. The community and voluntary sector is keen to ensure that outreach provision builds on the structures and local intelligence already in place.

While the role of the sector is recognised in policy and contracting, the CVSF feel there is less recognition of the value of their contribution at planning and design stage.

One of the biggest challenges facing the sector is the move towards 'intelligent commissioning'. Government is seeking to reduce the number of main contractors delivering employment and skills related services, with the majority of the recent public sector contracts related to worklessness tendered for on a regional or sub-regional basis. Organisations will need support in adapting to the changing situation facing the third sector and in preparing bids for public service contracts and collaborating on tenders.

The Community Voluntary Sector Forum provides the mechanism for ensuring dissemination and information flow among the range of third sector organisations involved in employment and skills support. It is hoped that the involvement of Working Together, (with resource input from CESSG), will improve buy-in from the many organisations involved in employment and skills provision.

2.4 Action Plan

Concerns were expressed regarding the City Employment and Skills Action Plan (Annex 1 within the Plan).

There is general consensus that the Action Plan is disparate and too numerous. Clearly, this is a consequence of how the plan was formulated where partners were invited to submit 'lists' of all projects currently being delivered which contributed to the strategic priorities of the CESP. It is important to recognise the contribution made by partners to employment and skills needs in the city; however, the plan only offers limited additionality in terms of responding to new challenges facing the city.

All partners feel it is necessary to consolidate, up-date and refresh the plan in line with changing circumstances. In addition, there is a need for revising targets and indicators too better evaluate the contribution of the action plan specifically in terms of outcomes. An assessment of the Action Plan is provided in section 4.

2.5 Policy and programme context

Although the CESP has only been in existence for just over 12 months, its future development and delivery sits within an evolving policy and programme agenda. The Brighton & Hove Sustainable Community Strategy – Creating a City of Opportunities, sets the overall vision, priorities and actions for Brighton & Hove to 2020. It is underpinned by the Local Area Agreement (LAA), which acts as the delivery framework for the Community Strategy. However, there

are a plethora of new strategies, plans and programmes which will influence the design and delivery of CESP. The issue of 'strategic fit' has been highlighted in terms of understanding priorities, roles and responsibilities.

The 'new' relevant strategies and plans, which impact on the CESP include:

The Reducing Inequality Review (2008)²

The Reducing Inequality Review sets out a broad range of policy options to reduce inequality in the city. The report shows that the most deprived areas across the city are not "closing the gap" on important indicators of equality. One of the key challenges is to ensure that those doing less well can share on the city's prosperity and are not left behind. Reference is made about the need to develop a strong link with the CESP, drawing together both...

"demand and supply-side actions in the labour market, helping people on benefit overcome barriers to employment and at the same time working with employers to maximise the jobs available."

The Review also highlights the important role that public bodies can play (as set out within Strategic Priority 4) by acting as exemplar employees, e.g. targeted recruitment initiatives, apprenticeships, etc.

Raising Our Game - Brighton and Hove Economic Strategy(draft 2008)³

The third Economic Development Strategy prepare by the BHEP, recognises the tough challenges facing Brighton & Hove and sets out a programme for both public agencies and the private sector to stimulate prosperity across the city.

The strategy identified three core themes, which frame a comprehensive action plan:

² Reducing Inequalities in Brighton & Hove. OCSI

³ Brighton & Hove Economic Partnership 2008

- Distinctive
- Ambitious
- Reducing inequality

The strategy recognises the importance of collaboration between public agencies – who affect the economy through planning, skills provision, schools etc. – and the employers, who grow jobs and add value to the economy.

The Social Enterprise Strategy⁴

The Social Enterprise Strategy proposes a partnership approach to supporting social enterprise through a membership network of social enterprises, private businesses, public sector organisations and other 3rd sector partners.

At a programme level, there are a number of significant changes which will impact on the CESP, specifically:

Business Support Simplification programme will reduce the number of publicly funded programmes from over 3,000 to under 100. The three key elements of the BSSP are:

- A single new portfolio of targeted business support
- A new uniform brand, '*Solutions for Business – funded by government*' to badge the products in the new portfolio
- Business Link will be the main referral route, for businesses and other users, to the products in the new portfolio

The first phase of this plan has been to map out the various schemes underway in the south east and their alignment with the proposed portfolio. This has allowed partners to assess the degree of fit with the portfolio and the scale of the work necessary to move to the new framework by 2010.

⁴ Brighton & Hove Social Enterprise Strategy. 2008. Brighton & Hove Business Community Partnership

The announcement of the new portfolio and associated branding is therefore an important milestone in the transition to a new simplified landscape. It is important to note, however, that the announcement does not constitute the launch of the portfolio to the business market. It signals the start of the implementation phase of the BSSP whereby as different products in the portfolio reach 'Go Live', public bodies procuring business support will be obliged to use the BSSP product specification and branding guidelines. Given procurement timelines, actual BSSP compliant services will take time to reach the market and the target date for full compliance is 2010.

BSSP may provide an important stimulus for coordinating effective support interventions, but success will depend on an active Business Link which responds to local SMEs needs and requirements.

Learning and Skills Council is to be abolished in 2010, with responsibilities for 14-19 education and learning being transferred to local authorities and two new agencies, Skills Funding Agency and Young People Learning Agency, established to drive forward actions to raise skills levels, including ensuring that the learning system is demand –led and responds to employers needs.

The Government has set in place a package of **Welfare Reform** to enable as many people as possible to “share in the rewards of work, because paid work is the best route for independence, health and well-being for most people.”⁵ In addition to replacing incapacity benefits for new claimants with the Employment and Support Allowance, further reforms are expected to be published in January 2009, which are likely to adopt in full recommendations made by the Freud Review, which said private and voluntary organisations should be paid to get people back to work. Reforms are expected to focus on ensuring that most people on incapacity benefit and lone parents on income support should be looking for work or preparing for it through courses and regular interviews.

⁵ DWP website

2.6 Economic prospects

Probably the biggest challenge facing CESP partners is responding to the new economic conditions facing the city. The current economic recession is (and will continue) impacting on the city.

A core element of the future development of the city's economy is largely based on the successful delivery of a large number of regeneration schemes. The credit crunch has reduced the availability of debt for property investment and development and increased the cost of borrowing to be more in line with associated risks. The credit crunch and housing market collapse is having a major impact on these schemes in the city, with a large number being postponed indefinitely. Indeed, alongside the financial sector, the construction sector continues to be one of the hardest hit during the financial crisis.

Employment in retail, restaurants and hotels is also forecast to drop significantly, which is of particular concern for Brighton & Hove. Business failures in the non-food retail sector rose by 17.4% compared with October 2007⁶. A particular concern is for the large independent retail sector (a particular strength of the city's retail offer) post Christmas.

At a national level, unemployment currently stands at 1.83m (November 2008), the highest level since labour came to power. The city has experienced the highest quarterly increase in Jobseekers Allowance since September 2004.

However, there is a general feeling that the city is now better prepared to cope with the recession. It currently has a broader economic base than during the last recession: a strong financial and business sector and expanding niche digital media sector; a well-established cultural offer, two high quality universities with a new medical school, one of the most highly educated working age population in the south east etc.

⁶ Insolvency Report and Distress index. Experian October 2008.

What are the implications for the CESP?

The tougher economic conditions will impact on the ability to deliver against the CESP headline targets. For example, the current economic climate means that it is will be extremely difficult to reach the CESP target of increasing employment rate from 75.6% to 76.6%.

Partners recognise the need to respond to the economic slowdown, which could have serious and damaging effects on the city's economy. For example, the Council has put together a 'recession relief' package to help businesses with cash flow.

In addition, there is likely to be a shift in emphasis towards measures to support business survival and job retention. An immediate requirement is the need for specific interventions and support for the 'new' unemployed.

The revised CESP Action Plan will need to both integrate with the new policy / programme agenda and take into account the immediate economic priorities facing the city.

3. Strategic Priorities and Action Priorities

3.1 Strategic Priorities

The CESP sets out a series of targets and actions based on four strategic priorities:

1. Supporting the creation, retention and development of local business and enterprise
 - a. Ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate employment space to support the creation of new jobs
 - b. Increase the level of entrepreneurship and business performance
2. Increasing the employment rate in the city;
 - a. Increase the number of jobs in the city that can be accessed by priority groups
 - b. Increase the number of people with labour market disadvantage accessing and remaining in sustainable employment
 - c. Develop partnerships with employers to promote diversity in the workplace and to respond to their recruitment and retention needs
3. Developing and improving skills for work;
 - a. Improve the skills and employability of young people
 - b. Improve the skills of the city's workforce
 - c. Improve the skills of disadvantaged residents in the city
4. Developing the infrastructure and intelligence to support the delivery of actions in the CESP.
 - a. Develop and sustain effective arrangements between partners
 - b. Improve intelligence, data-sharing and a common understanding of city employment and skills needs

Our discussions with partners on the CESSG confirm continued support for the four strategic priorities. They represent a broad framework within which

coordinated actions can be designed and delivered to improve employment and skills in the city. However, there is a general consensus that the 4 strategic priorities need to be measurable (currently, it is difficult to assess measurable impact, except for SP 2).

A further issue raised is with regard to SP 4, the 'setting the example' priority. The key issues section within Annex 1 does provide an explanation on the priority focus of SP4. However, the priority covers a range of strategic actions, i.e.

- a. Develop and sustain effective arrangements between partners (Strategic Objective 4a), particularly by putting in place the support infrastructure to manage and monitor delivery of the CESP and provide a platform (s) for collaboration among partners;
- b. Improve intelligence and data-sharing (Strategic Objective 4b)
- c. Ensure that partner organisations as employers put in place proactive measures to improve the employment prospects and skills of disadvantaged residents.

There is uncertainty among partners about the nature of the priority caused by a lack of clarity regarding the 'disparate objectives' of the strategic priority.

The other main comments relate to:

Translating the priorities into action

There is general agreement that the focus of activities has been on SP 3, specifically 'welfare to work' provision, which reflected:

- priorities at the time
- planned actions by partners and
- availability of discretionary funding.

There is agreement to re-focus actions to address the tougher economic conditions (i.e. SP 1) and design and implement actions which address demand-side employment challenges.

Performance measures

Headline performance targets and measures need to be introduced to enable partners to effectively monitor and evaluate the impact of the CESP.

4. Performance Review

Less than a year into the operational life of the CESP it would be premature to seek to draw definitive conclusions on the impacts and outcomes achieved by the Plan. However the Mid-term evaluation has sought to understand the progress made to date against key objectives and priority actions and this section summarises the main findings to date.

4.1 CESP as a catalyst for partnership working

One of the objectives of the CESP was to ensure a coordinated approach between agencies involved in commissioning and delivering initiatives linked to employment and skills training. The evaluation team has heard evidence of positive developments, with City Council departments and partner agencies working together more effectively:

“Whereas previously we competed with other organisations for funding, we have now started to take a more strategic approach. Through closer dialogue and better communication, we have gained a greater understanding of the strengths of our partners – this has led to us submitting a joint bid with our department as a junior partner, providing the expertise we are best placed to deliver.”

[City Council representative]

Other evidence suggested that the CESP and the CESSG meetings have served as a useful mechanism or forum for closer networking between partners involved. It can be said that there are a number of stages on the way to more effective partnership working between organisations:

- i. Raising awareness of the work, priorities and strategic objectives of the partners involved;
- ii. Identifying complementarities and overlaps between partners’ work;

- iii. Effective coordination of the work of organisations engaged in employment and skills initiatives; in some cases this may involved planning joint delivery of initiatives that link directly to the CESP priorities;
- iv. Embedding cross-organisational review and monitoring to ensure that the outcomes can be captured and improved over time.

To date it would appear that good progress is being made in relation to stages i. and ii. (above). The challenge following the outcomes of this Mid-term evaluation (and the identification of priority actions for 2009/10) will be to tighten coordination and delivery between different agencies.

Therefore the balance of opinion indicates that, while there is evidence of positive action being taken, there remains room to improve the way in which information is shared. A number of organisations are still working in isolation on various priorities and actions included in the CESP. These issues will need to be addressed in order to ensure effective and meaningful partnership working that is linked to the new priority actions.

4.2 Monitoring and measuring performance and outcomes

While the CESP aims to provide a strategic framework for encouraging employment, skills and enterprise in the city, it is imperative that this is supported by an equally robust framework for measuring the outcomes from CESP actions. The emerging view is that the list of performance indicators that form part of CESP is currently too numerous. There is a need to streamline the indicators used to measure the progress of the CESP, while ensuring that the measures used are compatible with those included in other key strategic plans, notably the LAA. The latter part of the evaluation will focus on these issues in greater detail, although it is anticipated that a tiered approach may be taken. This would involve agreeing headline measures linked to the four CESP strategic priorities and, within each of these headline measures, a set of specific performance indicators would be used, which relate to the identified priority actions.

4.3 Progress in relation to 2008/09 priority actions

The evaluation has considered progress in relation to the actions identified as priorities during the CESP’s first year. By consulting with key partners and reviewing monitoring data submitted to the City Council, we have colour-coded progress using a traffic-light classification:

- **Red:** Little or no evidence of progress in relation to this priority.
- **Amber:** Some evidence of progress with scope for further action in relation to this priority.
- **Green:** Evidence of good levels of progress with positive outputs reported

The table below summarises progress against 2008/09 actions, based on the evidence reviewed by the evaluation team. Further commentary is provided below.

| PRIORITY ACTIONS 2008/09 | |
|---|-------|
| 1) Map the profile of city’s available employment workspace | Amber |
| 2) Provide targeted outreach services to help disadvantaged people back into work | Green |
| 3) Provide a fast track housing benefit service to ease financial hardship | Green |
| 4) Support businesses to employ inactive welfare claimants | Amber |
| 5) Encourage employers to adapt flexible working practices | Amber |
| 6) Increase participation to E2E programmes and strengthen progression routes | Green |
| 7) Strengthen progression opportunities from Level 3 and 4 | Green |
| 8) Work with universities to develop higher level skills programmes | Amber |
| 9) Review the impact of partners organisations as employers | Amber |

1. Map the profile of city's available employment workspace

An audit of industrial estates has been completed as part of the Employment Land Study, led by the City Council's Economic Development department. Research has also been commissioned to examine sectoral trends and growth in Brighton and Hove. The Business Retention and Inward Investment plan (BRII) will provide the work plan for the Council's economic development team, specifically in terms of building on and support cluster strengths in the city. The outcomes of the research and evolving work plan will inform CESP actions and interventions during 2009/10.

2. Provide targeted outreach services to help disadvantaged people back into work

A number of specific actions have taken place to contribute to this priority. They include the production of a strategic action plan for the delivery of outreach services (April 2008) and meetings of 'commissioning' partners to improve the coordination of funding for outreach provision in Brighton & Hove. This has involved close working between the Council, Learning and Skills Council, PCT and Jobcentre Plus.

A range of community and voluntary organisations are involved in the delivery of outreach services to individuals in disadvantaged areas of the city. They are keen to ensure that their knowledge and intelligence is used in developing improved coordination of outreach services. It is essential that outreach support is continued as the economic conditions are likely to present additional barriers to work for those furthest from the labour market.

Tourism Futures (£70,000 WNF)

Tourism Futures supports a number of project, including a Pre-Employment Training Programme run alongside the services of JC Plus and the LSC and with employer engagement through the Tourism Forum. The programme has a number of component elements:

Individual client support: each client is given individually tailored support to help them develop key employability skills such as CV-writing, job search and interview techniques.

Bespoke training: clients are then placed onto a tailored course of sector-specific training delivered by City College and Care-Coops to gain essential skills based upon accredited courses.

Work Placement: Engage Solutions engage employers, agree work placements for course-participants and ensure guaranteed interview for completers.

During 2008/9 this project will deliver 45 trainees and 30 job outcomes into the local Tourism Industry. Post training support is provided to all participants through the Working Links ESF/DWP Stepping Stones contract in order to maximise potential for securing and sustaining employment.

The project started in September 08 and to date 25 local residents have finished the courses and 5 have entered into employment.

The project supports the strong tourism and hospitality sector within the city and the model has potential to be rolled-out to other business sectors, e.g. construction.

Strengthening Involvement of the community and voluntary sector

During 2008/09, funding has been made available to support the CVSF engage and involve the growing community & voluntary sector in delivery of the CESP priorities. In addition, the funding enables CVSF to ensure that the sector's views, experiences and expertise are influencing service development and delivery.

Delivery has been via four neighbourhood learning networks, bringing together providers for information and knowledge sharing. The Working Together Project has been contracted by CVSF to undertake the project.

Further work is required to strengthen involvement and engage third sector organisations in CESP, in terms of designing and delivering future projects and effectively linking with existing programmes such as Brighton & Hove Works.

Breakthrough

Breakthrough is a programme that enables outreach workers to give one to one support for individuals to take the next steps towards sustainable employment. Each participant gets an individual Information, Advice and Guidance session and support to draw up their action plan. Ongoing support is offered through the programme so participants can best access existing services and courses.

The programme makes a significant contribution to both reducing health inequalities and increasing skills for life levels in neighbourhoods facing most disadvantage. Working with 8 partners, partners are running 15 health and well-being courses this term, with literacy, language and numeracy embedded in them. Learners can look at different aspects of health and how to manage their health more effectively as well as improving their skills for life.

The projects focus on adults who are unemployed and live in East Brighton. The projects link the community based adult learning outreach workers and the emerging health trainers network in the city to the main learning providers and specialist employment brokerage services in order to support residents to access training to improve their Skills for Life, increase awareness on health related issues and improve employability.

Partners include Whitehawk Inn, the Bridge, Hangleton & Knoll, project, Friends Centre, Varndean College, City College, Portslade Community College and Care Co-ops.

To date 163 residents have benefited from the project, 11 have moved into employment, 14 have begun volunteering and 36 have been offered work placements.

The projects are good examples of joint collaboration across health and worklessness agendas and have the potential to be developed and rolled-out across the city (depending on resources being available).

3. Provide a fast track housing benefit service to ease financial hardship

The City Council's Housing Department has led a series of activities that have resulted in positive outcomes linked to this priority. This includes measures to ease the transition for those moving into work through the establishment of new criteria for the award of discretionary housing payments to people moving into work. Action on this priority has also led to quicker processing of benefits claims. Positive progress is being made.

4. Support businesses to employ inactive welfare claimants

Some innovative approaches have been rolled out under this priority, including Local Employer Panels and Work Trials, which sign up employers and seek to match job vacancies to welfare claimants for job trials without the need for the jobseeker to sign off benefit or for the employer to put the jobseeker on his/her pay roll. This is seen as a low-risk opportunity for both parties and can take place for a maximum of 15 days. 10 out of 44 individuals who have undertaken Work Trials have subsequently entered employment. While this is encouraging, there remains a significant cohort of the city's population that is economically inactive and forging greater links between them and local employers remains an important priority.

5. Encourage employers to adapt flexible working practices

The main activity linked to this priority is the work of Labour Market Recruitment Advisers (LMRA), who liaise with local employers and aim to influence their recruitment activities to include a diverse workforce including flexible working practices. In addition, the LEADER group in the City is an influential group of employers who champion the advantages of employing a diverse workforce. This group is also actively working to support local SMEs by promoting best working practices.

6. Increase participation to e2e programmes and strengthen progression routes

Entry to Employment (e2e) provides a variety of training to young people aged 16-19, and up to 25 for learners with learning difficulties. The training focuses on developing employability, social and life skills, with sector-specific skills options also available. The programme, led by the LSC, has seen an expansion in the range of options available to include art, sport, construction, personal and social development, adult literacy and numeracy, ICT, music, and motor vehicle maintenance.

7. Strengthen progression opportunities from Level 3 and 4

The Sussex Learning Network has reported a considerable amount of work in relation to this priority. SLN has prioritised the development of progression pathways and agreements in six key sectors⁷. Over 300 individual agreements have been set up, which provide a guaranteed interview or offer of a place on HE courses (spanning foundation degree to postgraduate level).

8. Work with universities to develop higher level skills programmes

The evaluation has found relatively limited evidence of impact in relation to this priority. We are aware that HE courses are delivered at further education institutions, providing opportunities for students to access higher level skills in a wide range of settings. Further work is planned through the proposed Centre for Work and Learning being established by the SLN and partners to develop customised provision to support workforce development.

9. Review the impact of partners organisations as employers in improving employment and skills amongst disadvantaged residents

A range of outcomes has been reported under this priority, including:

- 4 apprenticeships provided by the LSC to disadvantaged residents;
- Jobcentre Plus has ring-fenced two new posts for disadvantaged residents from the city;
- BHCC is committed to providing employment opportunities for long term unemployed residents and school leavers. This includes providing accredited training and support.

⁷ IT; Arts/New Media; Bioscience; Health and Social Care; Sport and Leisure; Travel, Tourism and Retail.

This priority underlines the important role that CESSG partners play in setting an example to other organisations in terms of promoting employment opportunities for disadvantaged residents.

4.4 Progress in relation to the Action Plan

The full matrix of actions in support of the CESP's Strategic Priorities 2009-11 illustrates the breadth and range of activities that are linked to the Plan. The CESP has been described by a number of contributors to this evaluation as an amalgam of existing actions and to a considerable extent, the CESP's success will depend on the successful delivery, by all partners involved, of their own internal strategies.

In view of the challenging economic conditions that are faced in 2009, there may be a need to refocus some aspects of the CESP action plan and target support to ensure the sustainability and survival of businesses. Adapting programmes to meet changing needs requires flexibility and dynamism. The issue of flexibility has been raised by a number of partners during interviews. In some cases we have found that organisations have been able to tailor activities to ensure they complement CESP priorities. Other agencies have a slightly more prescribed remit to deliver policies and initiatives set out by central government / the Department for Work and Pensions. Nevertheless, such organisations can also modify the way in which their programmes are delivered to ensure they are best aligned with the objectives and vision set out in the CESP. The Local Employer Panels set up by Jobcentre Plus and which seek to match job vacancies to welfare claimants are one example.

5. Future Challenges and Priorities

As well as assessing progress and general performance of the CESP, an important phase of our work is to identify some of the future challenges facing the city with regard to employment and skills and begin the process of shaping a revised action plan to respond to these new priorities.

All partners agree that the immediate emphasis (and new challenge) is to tackle the current economic downturn and ensure that the city is in a positive position to respond when the economy improves. This was confirmed during one-to-one meetings with CESSG members and at the workshop session in November.

There is general agreement that the skills and employment landscape is (still) far too congested. The design and delivery of the CESP has provided an excellent start but more needs to be done to rationalise and integrate the delivery and funding of skills and employment services.

As set out in section 2, within the city a number of new strategies, programmes and plans have/are being developed to stimulate economic progress and reduce inequality. It is important that the CESP, particularly at the action end, integrates with relevant plans. There needs to be clarity with regard to roles and responsibilities together with a robust and consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation so that the effectiveness of interventions, particularly those concerned with skills and employment services can be properly evaluated.

The publicly funded part of the employment and skills landscape, particularly the LSC and Jobcentre Plus, are part of national arrangements that are themselves being reformed. Although these may cause uncertainty in the short term, they are seen as opportunities for the city to design, develop and deliver arrangements that provide the services Brighton & Hove needs.

At the workshop meeting in November, a list of priorities was identified:

1. Retain, train and sustain employment
2. Clarify communications around funding, train to gain and skills for growth
3. AACS
4. Procurement/ reaching funding
5. Intelligence – Prepare for the future. Role and support to business support organisations
6. Keep positive about long-term opportunities
7. Role of self-employment/ creative options, capitalise on volunteering strategy
8. Business support / inward investment (e.g. BRII action planning)

A coordinated approach is required to tackle economic recession through deliverable projects and programmes, which respond to current economic needs, e.g. support to the independent retail sector in B&H (particularly post Christmas).

In addition, the emphasis of the Action Plan needs to shift towards mainstream economic development /employment programmes, including proactive business support.

An important next phase of our work is to work with the CESSG to develop the priorities that reflect future challenges into a revised CESP Action Plan for the short and medium term.

6. Next Steps

Following consideration of the Interim Report, our next phase of work will focus on:

- Designing a future framework for monitoring and evaluation of the CESP, including data sources / gaps
- Working with the CESSG in prioritising actions to improve the performance of the CESP

Appendix 1: Consultees

Jonathan Stevenson: JobCentre Plus, Senior Business Manager

Kerry Kyriacou : Business Link

Sean Jarrett: Business Link, Head of Strategy

Caroline Wood: SEEDA, Deputy Area Director-Sussex

Gilly Bartrip: SEEDA

Donna Keenan: CCBH, Work Based Learning Manager

John Evans: CCBH, Deputy Principal

Sarah Hardman: Sussex Learning Network

Thea Allison: Director B&H Business Community Partnership

Tony Mernagh: CEO B&H Economic Partnership

Sally Hiscock: CVSF

Michelle Pooley: Working Together

Tom Scalon: Acting Dir of Public Health

Lydie Lawrence

Michael Nix: LSC, Partnership Director

Paul Stoggles: LSC, Economic Development Manager

Scott Marshall (Chair CESP) BHCC, Director Cultural Services

Adam Bates: BHCC, Head of Tourism

Cheryl Finella: BHCC, Economic Development Lead Officer)

Angela Gaitani: BHCC

Paula Black: BHCC, Interim Analysis and Intelligence Manager Policy

Simon Newell 2020 Community Partnership Officer

Paul Brewer: BHCC, LAA

Rob Dawson: BHCC

Dan Shelley: CYPT, Learning Partnership Manager

Emma Gilbert: BHCC, Single Homeless & Work & Learning Manager

Appendix 2: Consultation questionnaire

City Employment and Skills Plan (CESP): Consultation with Partner Organisations

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Name | |
| Organisation | |
| Position / Job title | |
| Telephone Email | |
| Please tick the relevant box(es) to denote your involvement with the CESP. Are you... | |
| a) A member of the City Employment and Skills Steering Group | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) A member of the City Employment and Skills Working Group | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) A member of an organisation delivering specific projects identified within the CESP Action Plan | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Q1 How would you summarise the contribution that your organisation has made to the delivery of the City Employment and Skills Plan?

Q2 How relevant is the City Employment and Skills Plan to the strategic objectives and activities of your organisation and how have you used it?

Tick box

Extremely relevant

Fairly relevant

Not relevant

Please provide further details as to how you have used the CESP:

Q3 The CESP has identified the following strategic priorities.

- i) Support the creation, retention and development of local business and enterprise
- ii) Increase the employment rate in the City
- iii) Develop and improve skills for work
- iv) Develop the infrastructure and intelligence to support the delivery of the actions in the CESP

Do you think the strategic priorities adequately reflect the challenges facing the city?
Yes/No

Please use the space below to provide further details to explain the reasons for your answer:

Q4 The CESSG has identified the following priorities for action during 2008/09

- Map the profile of the city's available employment workspace
- Provide targeted outreach services to help disadvantaged people back into employment and training
- Provide a fast track housing benefit service to ease financial hardship when people are making the transition to work
- Support businesses to employ inactive welfare claimants
- Encourage employers to adopt flexible working practices as a means of diversifying the workforce
- Increase participation to Entry to Employment programmes and strengthen progression routes
- Strengthen progression opportunities from Level 3 and 4 onto Higher Education
- Work with universities to develop higher level skills programme that are relevant to the needs of the City's fast growing businesses
- Review the impact that partner organisations have as employers in improving employment and skills amongst disadvantaged residents

IMPACT

Q7 How could / should the impact of the CESP be measured? What, in your view, would success look like?

Please provide details:

COLLABORATION

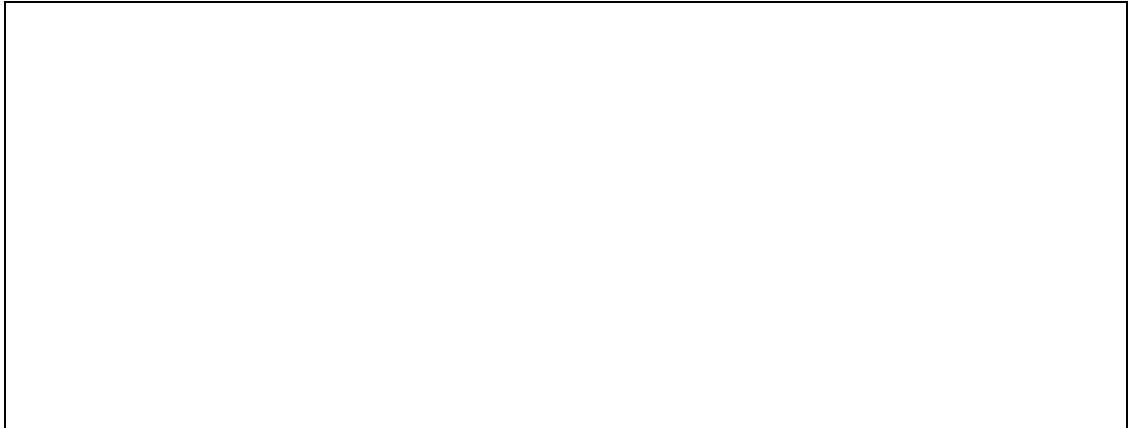
Q8 Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements by ticking the appropriate box and inserting any relevant comments.

1 = Strongly agree; 2 = agree to an extent; 3 = neither agree nor disagree;
4 = disagree to an extent; 5 = strongly disagree

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Notes / comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|------------------|
| The CESP has facilitated the development of new partnerships with a range of other service providers and agencies | | | | | | |
| Communication with other partners involved in the delivery of the CESP has been good throughout | | | | | | |
| The CESP has ensured that organisations are working together effectively in the pursuit of common objectives | | | | | | |
| The Steering Group provides an important focal point and infrastructure to drive forward delivery of the CESP | | | | | | |

Q9 What are the main challenges facing the City which relate to the strategic priorities set out in the CESP? Please provide brief details.

Q10 Are there any further points you would like to make with regard to the CESP?



THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME & CO-OPERATION, WHICH IS GREATLY APPRECIATED

