Work & Skills Analysis Consultation

Plymouth Employment & Skills Board has commissioned a report providing a detailed analysis of work and skills related data for the Plymouth area. This report has raised a number of issues for consideration, before the Board identifies the priority work and skills issues for the area for the coming years.

Copies of the full data analysis (conducted by the Skills and Learning Intelligence Module at the University of Exeter) are available at www.plymouthesb.co.uk for downloading, together with copies of reports from SERIO at the University of Plymouth providing the results of a recent survey of employers in the area and a survey of skills provision completed in 2009.

Comments on the issues raised in the discussion document are invited to be submitted to the Board by emailing info@plymouthesb.co.uk, in response to any or all of the questions on the feedback form.

Both the discussion paper and the feedback form are attached and also available from the website.

Any comments should be received by 10th September 2010.

Graham Morris

Project Director

Plymouth Employment & Skills Board

SW

SOUTH WEST OBSERVATORY
SKILLS AND LEARNING

Plymouth Employment and Skills Board

Work and Skills Analysis 2010

Discussion Brief

Produced by SLIM

July 2010

1. Introduction

This Discussion Brief highlights key issues emerging from the Plymouth Work and Skills Analysis 2010. It's aim is to inform discussions by the partners and stakeholders in the Plymouth Employment and Skills Board (ESB) area and to shape the development of work and skills priorities.

The Brief explores four questions that are central the work and skills agenda in Plymouth:

- How is Plymouth's population changing, and what are the implications for jobs and skills?
- What jobs are available now and in the future and what challenges lie ahead?
- Who isn't working in Plymouth and why?
- Does Plymouth have the right skills to meet government aspirations and employers' needs?

2. Plymouth's population is changing. What are the implications for jobs and skills?

The evidence

The demographic profile of an area has a fundamental impact on the availability of labour and skills. Led by inward migration, the population of Plymouth ESB is expanding and is projected to grow by 11.3% between 2008 and 2021, contributing to economic growth.

Yet, Plymouth ESB's population is ageing; people are working longer; and the number of young people is falling. Population projections forecast that over the 10 years, from 2008 to 2017, Plymouth will see:

- significant growth in the number of people aged 65 and over;
- growth in the number of workers aged 50 to 60 and those aged 25 to 40;
- a decline in the number of people aged 40 to 50; and
- fewer young people - from 2008 to 2017, there will be a 13% fall in the number of 15 to 19 year olds in the Plymouth ESB area.

The population of Plymouth rises rapidly through the teenage years, peaking at age 21, after which it falls dramatically, as young people who have come to the City to study, leave to find jobs. This represents a loss of what is likely to be a relatively well-educated and skilled group of young people.

Assuming state pension age were to remain constant, the working age population in Plymouth ESB will have grown from 2008 to 2020 by 3%, while the non-working age population would have grown by around 23%. However, by April 2020 the SPA for women females will have risen to 65 years of age. As a result the working age population of the Plymouth ESB area will rise by 9% while the rise in the non-working age population is reduced to 13%. The accommodation of a significantly greater number of female workers aged 60 to 65 will be a feature challenge for the Plymouth labour market over the next ten years.

Whilst the numbers of international migrants rose rapidly from 1,020 per annum in 2003/04 to 3,160 in 2006/07, this flow has since been falling. The Hotel and Restaurant sector employs the highest number of migrant workers, followed by health care and manufacturing. 92% of migrants earn less than £7.00 per hour while 66% earn less than £5.99. Migrant workers are most often employed as factory hands, kitchen & catering assistants, maids and room attendants, thus filling jobs that are unattractive to the resident population.

Implications

- The fall in the numbers of young people will result in increased competition between schools and training providers. This is a danger that this may impact on the impartiality of information, advice and guidance as organisations try maintain funding levels and the viability of 6^{th} forms.

- Industries that have historically recruited young people when filling 'entry level' jobs may find it increasingly difficult to do so. Will employers who have traditionally relied on young new entrants need to change recruitment and training strategies?

- Local employers may not be taking advantage of or benefiting fully from the large numbers of highly skilled and educated students in the Plymouth area. How can we make better use of the skills that young graduates bring to Plymouth and ensure that they stay in the area?

- The Plymouth area benefits from significant numbers of migrants aged between 30 and 45. How much is known about the skills and experience that these migrants bring? How many middle aged migrants 'down-size', and are their skills fully employed?

- If the economy picks up over the next few years, coinciding with a large cohort of baby-boomers entering retirement, this will create a significant replacement demand just as the numbers of young people are declining. What steps could be taken to prepare for this replacement demand?

- People are living longer, healthier lives. Large numbers of baby-boomers are approaching state pension age. It is unlikely that the baby-boom generation will wish to be idle in retirement. They potentially have much to contribute in the way of skills and experience. How can we harness the talents of the baby-boomers leaving the labour market?

- Over the next 10 years the labour market will need to accommodate greater numbers of women aged 60 to 65. Budget 2010 indicates that retirement the retirement age for men will also rise to 66 by 2016. How do employment and training practices need to change to retain older workers for longer, especially as retirement age rises?

- It is likely that international migration will continue to decline. Migrants currently fill large volumes of low paid / low status jobs that may not appear attractive to native job-seekers. What are the implications for employers seeking to fill lower paid jobs and how might they need to adapt or be supported to do so? How might the skills of migrant workers be better utilised?

3. What jobs are available now and in the future and what challenges lie ahead?

The evidence

From 2004 to 2008 the number of people who were working in the Plymouth area grew by around 6000, or just over 2%. Over the same period Plymouth ESB's employment rate (i.e. the proportion of the working age population that was working) grew from 74.8% to 76.3%. Plymouth (like Devon County and the South West as a whole) has a growing population and an expanding economy; an economy that has been successful in providing employment for an increasing number of people; and, until the start of the recession, an economy that appears to have provided employment for a growing proportion of the working age population.

The recession hit Devon early, as the peak of the credit crunch in October 2008 coincided with seasonal employment falls in many tourism-dependent areas. Since the recession, roughly 2.0% of the working age population has been made redundant in both Plymouth Sutton and Plymouth Devonport and 1.4% in South West Devon.

The sectors hardest hit were manufacturing, retail and information and communication sectors. The proportion of redundancies in Financial and Insurance activities (4.0%) was relatively low compared to the South West as a whole (10.0%).

At the same time, vacancies have fallen. In Plymouth, vacancies have fallen by 16% since the recession began. In South Hams the decline was 24%. In Caradon, the initial sharp fall in vacancies was followed by growth in vacancy numbers, creating a net fall of only 7% over the last two years.

The largest numbers of vacancies are for jobs in elementary, associate professional (largely the product of a 72% rise in vacancies for sales & related associate professionals and a 300% rise in vacancies for health associate professionals, who are mainly nurses), sales & customer service and personal service occupations. Some of these vacancies remain hard to fill, despite rising unemployment. Over half (52%) of all vacancies in caring and personal service occupations were left unfilled for four weeks or longer throughout the recession. Two-thirds of the vacancies in this group were for care assistants and home carers.

So what are the future prospects for jobs? A clear concern for Plymouth, given current fiscal policy, has to be the proportion of public sector employment locally. Public sector employment is particularly concentrated in urban areas, such as Plymouth where it made up more than a third of total employment in 2008. This is not surprising as hospitals, the university, colleges and other major public sector employers are located here. Public sector employment rates in West Devon and Caradon are closer to the national average. It is fair to say that the Plymouth ESB remains fairly susceptible to the impact of public sector spending cuts.

The timing, scale and nature of future job cuts is unknown. However, it is estimated that a 10% cut in public expenditure may result in a loss of 12,000 jobs across Devon as a whole. Current indications are that Government is seeking a 25% cut in unprotected departments' budgets over the next four years. It is important to note that the public sector workforce is, generally speaking, highly skilled. The public sector is also an important provider of part-time and flexible employment and employment for women.

The Coalition Government has placed a clear emphasis on future employment growth being driven by the private sector. However, employment growth in the Plymouth ESB area has been almost exclusively public sector led. Public sector employment growth between 2003 and 2008 has been as high as 25% in some areas (e.g. Caradon), 14% in Plymouth while private sector employment in commercial businesses has actually fallen in Plymouth. West Devon was the only part of the Plymouth ESB area where private sector employment growth (5.7%) outstripped public sector growth, and where the private sector grew faster locally than it did regionally (2.4%) or nationally (2%).

The three largest sectors, in employment terms, are distribution, hotels and restaurants; public administration, education and health; and banking, finance and insurance. Compared with the South West and England, Plymouth has relatively high levels of employment in distribution, hotels & restaurants, manufacturing and the public sector and relatively low levels in finance, banking and insurance.

The largest percentage growth in private sector employment between 2003 - 2008 was recorded in transport & communications, which saw a 20% increase (around 1,720 additional employees) compared with the England average of 0.6%. However, this is a very small employment sector for the area, with only 6% of the workforce. 13% of the workforce is employed in Business & financial services, a sector which saw very minor employment growth of 0.9% across the ESB area as a whole over the period: a product of declines in employment of 5.6%, 7.3% and 1.5% in Caradon, Plymouth and West Devon respectively, counterbalanced by an enormous 42.5% growth in this sector in the South Hams. 26% of employment is in distribution, hotels and restaurants, a sector which grew by 0.5% across the ESB area over the period: a product of a fall in employment of 9.2% in Caradon, counterbalanced by growth of 1.4% in Plymouth, 5.4% South Hams and 3.7% in West Devon. Construction, a small sector with 4% of employment, saw 1.3 % growth. This sector was badly hit by the recession and is likely to be affected by pubic sector cuts. Finally, manufacturing employs 12% of the workforce, but experienced a fall of 8.8% in employment over the period.

It is important to note that this data does not take into account the impact of the recession.

South West Growth Scenarios show that Business services is expected to be the biggest source of new jobs in the South West over the next decade as the economy recovers from the recession, accounting for more than half the net new jobs in the region between 2010 and 2020. Manufacturing will continue to lose jobs. Over the same period, squeezes on public spending mean that public administration, education and health are all unlikely to see the sort of net job creation seen in the decade to 2008, although, looking further ahead, the health and care sectors will be an important source of jobs growth.

Knowledge-intensive sectors (KIS) are particularly important in an economy. They are typically highly productive, have high levels of innovation, demand a highly skilled workforce and represent areas of potential growth. The proportion of total employment that is in KIS varies across the 4 Devon ESB areas. Plymouth, with 58% of employment is in KIS, is the only part of Devon where KIS employment is higher than the national average (53%). Yet much of the local KIS employment is found in the public sector. Employment in high-tech manufacturing in Plymouth fell by 40% (and by 80% in Caradon), during a time when the economy was growing. Recent trends in medium to high-tech manufacturing are also worrying, with many areas (including Caradon, South Hams and West Devon) exceeding the wider regional and national trend of declining employment in this sector. This suggests that The Plymouth ESB area will be particularly vulnerable should significant cuts be imposed on both education and health spending.

Knowledge intensive services account for 39.6% of employment in the Plymouth ESB area and forms by far the largest element of KIS. However education and health make up 65% of employment in knowledge intensive services across most of the Plymouth ESB are (58% in South Hams). This is significantly higher than the national average of 48%. The fact that knowledge intensive employment is so concentrated in the public sector within Plymouth suggests that the local economy may be highly vulnerable in the face of cuts in public spending.

Supporting the development of private sector KIS growth will be critical, if progress towards a knowledge economy is to be made in the medium term.

So what about new businesses? In common with most of Devon, Plymouth ESB has relatively low levels of new business births. The number of new businesses, taken as a % of business stock, has also been falling, although survival rates are holding up.

Implications

Understanding where private sector employment will come from and how to support this via skills provision is clearly vital. A starting point is to look at sectors where Plymouth ESB area already has a relative advantage. The Plymouth Economic

Strategy identifies six priority sectors: Creative Industries; Marine Industries; Tourism and leisure; Health and medical; Advanced engineering; Business Services. Plymouth EAS has relative specialisms that could be strengths, in manufacturing and in distribution, hotels and restaurants.

Strategic partnerships must understand how future growth is likely to be generated and develop strategies to encourage the development of key sectors and knowledge-based industries (KBIs). A joined-up offer, covering leadership and management skills, knowledge-transfer, technician-level skills and administrative support, can both attract new businesses to an area and help them grow.

- How clear are we about which industries we wish to support? Do we have effective strategies for engaging employers in our key sectors?
- How clearly do we understand the skills required to foster these industries?
- Are we delivering a joined-up offer in terms of employment and skills provision?

There is also a balance to be struck between creating 'jobs' in low employment intensity sectors which may be associated with high tech developments, and those lower value sectors, such as retail, which are more employment-rich? What can be done to increase the attractiveness of jobs in employment-rich sectors?

The increasing availability of highly-skilled employees, who previously worked in the public sector, may be valuable to a growing private sector. Do we know what skills former public sector workers may bring to the private sector? How do we retain this talent in Plymouth ESB?

Given the low levels of business generation, how well are business support arrangements working at present? Is there more that could be done to promote entrepreneurship, perhaps in schools or among particular groups? Is there more that could be done to take advantage of the presence of the University of Plymouth to support innovation and new growth sectors?

4. Who isn't working in Plymouth and why?

The evidence

In April 2008, 1.6% of the working age population of the Plymouth ESB area was claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), slightly above the Devon and regional figures. It climbed rapidly to 3.2% in February 2009, and has since levelled off, fluctuating slightly between 3.0% and 3.4%.

This relatively rapid rise in unemployment during the early stages of the recession was partly due to the credit crunch coinciding with the seasonal loss of employment in tourism-dependent areas. It is also apparent that the average unemployment rate for the Plymouth ESB hides considerable variations within the area, such as the fact that the claimant unemployment rate in Plymouth is twice that for the South Hams and West Devon.

There are neighbourhoods in central Plymouth with claimant count at 13.5% - 20 times higher than parts of West Devon and ten times the rate found in some affluent parts of the city. Areas of high unemployment are particularly concentrated in the South and West of the city, around Stonehouse, Morice Town, Devonport, Whitleigh and Southway. Outside Plymouth, only central Liskeard (in Caradon) has a claimant count above 6.45%. Within Plymouth, areas of extremely high and low unemployment exist in close proximity.

Plymouth has comparatively high rates of long-term unemployment (people who have been out of work and claiming JSA for more than six months). In January 2010, 32% of all JSA claimants in the Plymouth ESB area were long term unemployed, a rate substantially higher than that found in neighbouring geographies, but below the national average. Long-term unemployment is becoming increasingly prevalent amongst younger people aged 18 to 24, who now make up 24% of all long-term JSA claimants (compared to 17% before the recession).

Men account for 74% of all claimants[1] and 80% of all long-term claimants. In other words, long-term male unemployment is a particular problem in Plymouth. People who normally work in skilled trades and elementary occupations also have a greater chance of being long-term unemployed, compared with other occupations. The lowest qualified are also being disproportionately affected by the current recession, with the employment rate for this group falling faster than that for the population overall. The regional unemployment rate for individuals without any formal qualifications is 11%, compared to 6% for individuals with any qualification.

More significant in terms of the workless population is the (7.7%) of the working age population on incapacity benefits (IB or ESA), higher than neighbouring ESBs. Thus significantly more people are claiming incapacity benefits than claim JSA. Across England there are roughly 1.6 people on incapacity benefits for each person claiming JSA while in Plymouth it is 2.1 and in West Devon and South Hams it is nearer three.

Around 64,000 in Plymouth are inactive, roughly 70% of whom do not want to work. Of the others (who would like to work but who are not actively seeking work), the largest groups are those who have a long-term sickness, are students or are looking after family or home.

Implications

Plymouth has relatively high concentrations of unemployment within its area, concentrated amongst young people and the low skilled. Long-term unemployment

---

[1] It cannot be inferred from this figure that 72% of unemployed people are male, as where joint claims are made, on behalf of a workless couple, these are disproportionately claimed by males.

is on the increase and is typically male. The question is what can be done to better link people in these areas to the job opportunities created within Plymouth, bearing in mind factors such as the nature of the job opportunities available and the lack of willingness to travel significant distances to work found among unemployed people in many deprived neighbourhoods? What more can be done to link economic development and regeneration to tackling worklessness among priority groups and neighbourhoods? What steps can be taken to help people who are detached from the labour market to appreciate and better represent their skills to employers?

Women and professionals working in the public sector are now also vulnerable. Increasing numbers of lone parents, older people and people with health issues, who were previously on incapacity benefits, will need to start looking for work as the Work Programme kicks in. And there are of course others - people with learning difficulties, mental health issues or who are leaving care - who have always struggled to find employment.

- What more can we do to entice employers to take on and up-skill the workless?
- Are there particular groups on whom we should now focus (e.g. public sector workers / young people) or for whom specific forms of support are appropriate?
- How can we help to link employers with Work Programme contractors and get the most out of Coalition Government employment programmes?

5. Does Plymouth have the right skills to meet government targets and employers' needs?

The evidence

In terms of skills, Plymouth ESB performs less well than the region or nation as a whole, and is less well qualified than most of its neighbouring ESBs. The figures for Plymouth ESB mask significant variations within the area with Plymouth performing less well than Caradon, West Devon and South Hams

- 25.9% of the working age population was qualified to Level 4 in Plymouth ESB (37% in West Devon), the second lowest proportion of the four Devon LESBs, and well below both the South West and national averages, of 28.3% and 28.7% respectively.

- 49% of the working age population in the Plymouth ESB area was qualified to at least Level 3. This is the second lowest level locally, marginally below the South West average (49.5%) but above that for England as a whole (47.4%). South Hams has the highest proportion qualified to Level 3 and above in Devon, at 58.1% in 2008. Plymouth was the fourth lowest proportion at 45.6%, below the regional and national averages.

- 68.4% of the working age population was qualified to at least Level 2. This is comparable with the figure for England as a whole (68.6%) but 3 percentage points below the regional figure (71.4%).

In terms of the Leitch intermediate targets for 2011, Plymouth is:

- above the regional average and the target level in terms of proportion of adults with literacy skills equivalent to level 1 (91% compared to 89%).

- equal to the regional average in terms of the proportion of adults currently with numeracy skills equivalent to entry Level 3. The shortfall for this intermediate target is just one percentage point.

- below the regional average and targets for the proportions of adults holding qualifications equivalent to NVQ Level 2, 3 and 4 or higher. Plymouth is furthest short of the Level 2 target, with a shortfall of 10 percentage points.

If we look at the proportion of pupils in state maintained schools who achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A* - C, South Hams and West Devon perform above the regional average in 2008/9. However, 47.3% of pupils in Schools in Caradon and 49.1% of pupils in schools in Plymouth achieved this benchmark: 3.6 percentage points and 1.8 percentage points respectively lower than the national average of 50.9%.

In terms of A levels, pupils studying in Plymouth attain 207 points, lower than the national average and averages for Torbay (215 points) and Devon (211 points). City College Plymouth, the largest provider of A level education in the area with around 2,000 students aged 16 – 18, achieves an average of 202 points per A level entry. This is slightly lower than the rates attained by similarly sized institutions, such as Exeter College (211 points), North Devon College / Petroc (210 points) and South Devon College (206 points).

Government has set national PSA targets to:

- increase the proportion of young people achieving Level 2 to 82% by 2011.

- increase the proportion of people achieving Level 3 at age 19 to 54% by 2011.

By 2009, 75.8% of people in Plymouth had achieved a Level 2 qualification at the age of 19, compared to 77.4% in Devon and 73.5% in Torbay. The proportion of 19 year olds achieving a Level 2 qualification increased steadily from 2005 to 2009, with rises of 10.3 percentage points in Plymouth, 8.4 percentage points in Devon, and 5.9 percentage points in Torbay. This is a rate of growth that is significantly higher than the aspiration within the historic PSA target - to increase the proportion by five percentage points over four years, from 2004 and 2008.

The proportion of people achieving Level 3 qualifications at aged 19 varies considerably in different areas. In 2009, 41.4% of 19 year olds in Plymouth had achieved a Level 3 qualification, ten percentage points below the national average.

In 2007 the proportion of 16-17 year olds in education and training in Plymouth (86%) was above both the England average (83%) and that for the South West (82%). In Devon the equivalent figure was 81%.

Looking at the pathways taken by young people, the proportion of young people staying on in full time education has risen rapidly in recent years (from 78.0 in 2007 to 84.2% in 2009) whilst the numbers entering work and training options declined from 14% to 8.6% in the same period. The primary feature that stands out from this is the low numbers of young people taking up apprenticeships. Just 3.5% of year 11 leavers from schools in Plymouth progressed into an Apprenticeship. The Government has an aspiration that one in five young people taking up an apprenticeship by 2020. The most popular work-based destinations for people leaving school in year 11 (aged 16) were jobs in: skilled construction, hairdressing, sales, skilled engineering and vehicle trades.

If we look at the aspirations of young people, to what extent are the apprenticeships on offer meeting these aspirations? Data suggests that, compared to demand:

- a relatively good supply, compared to levels of interest, of Apprenticeships in Business Administration & Law and Retail and Commercial Enterprise;

- a high level of interest, in comparison to the supply of opportunities, in a broad range of subject areas, including engineering, construction, leisure, travel & tourism, ICT, agriculture and the arts, media and publishing.

In terms of higher education (HE), the general trend has been for increasing participation from all parts of Devon. Between 2001 and 2009 the number of Devon residents entering HE grew by 11%, a rate of growth below that seen nationally (15%) and significantly below that seen in Plymouth (24%) in the same period. In 2007/08, the proportion of HE students from lower socio economic groups at the University of Plymouth was 34%, compared to average figures of 26.7% for Devon and 30% nationally.

But to what extent do these skills match the needs of employers? One way to understand this is to look at the extent of skills shortages and skills gaps.

Plymouth accounts for less than 2% of the region's Hard to fill vacancies, but more than 4% of employment, suggesting that employers in Plymouth may be facing fewer recruitment difficulties than those elsewhere in the South West.

The incidence of skills gaps (employers reporting their employees lack the skills to be proficient in their current jobs) in the Devon LESB areas is highest in Plymouth (28% in 2009, up from 24% in 2007). Within the Devon LESB area, Plymouth has the highest proportion of employees with a skills gap, with employers suggesting that 10.2% of all employees locally are not fully proficient in their jobs. This is a rise of 34% between 2007 and 2009. The skills that are most often missing are technical / practical skills, customer handling, team working, oral communication and problem-solving skills.

Regionally, People 1st, Semta and Skillsmart Retail were the sectors with both the greatest volumes of skills gaps and the sectors that have the greatest concentrations of skills gaps.

In terms of future skills needs, higher level skills, leadership and management skills and skills in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) are considered particularly important. Leadership and management skills are particularly important in ensuring that the skills that employees already possess are fully utilised. Nationally a greater proportion of employees identify themselves as being over-qualified than under-qualified to perform their current jobs. This suggests that measures to support employers to make the most of the skills that are available to them is an important accompaniment to raising skill levels.

Implications

The last government was clear - creating world class skills in the UK is a tripartite responsibility. This will not change. Skills development will continue to benefit individuals, employers and the State.

Recent years saw growth in public sector investment in skills. Between 2005/06 and 2007/08 the number of LSC-funded Level 2 learners rose by 50% as Train to Gain was rolled out across the four local ESB areas. The number of Plymouth residents entering higher education grew by 24% between 2001 and 2009. But this growth in publicly funded training will not continue. Greater emphasis will be placed on employers and individuals taking responsibility for identifying, articulating and investing in their own skills needs. How do employers articulate their skills needs? How do we ensure that enterprise agencies and training providers continue to engage and support SMEs in the future?

Employers report that the skills that are most often missing are technical / practical skills, customer handling, team working, oral communication and problem-solving skills. CBI research suggests that many employers now operate a 20/80 rule in recruitment, giving an 80% weighting to applicants' soft skills and 20% to their hard skills. They suggest that employers are increasingly willing to take responsibility for technical and job-specific training but want recruits with generic skills and good understanding of work. How do employers get more involved with schools to give young people a better understanding of the requirements and opportunities in the world of work?

In recent years, the proportion of Year 11 leavers (aged 16) continuing in full-time education has risen, while the proportion pursuing work and training options has fallen. Although numbers are rising, only 3% of Year 11 leavers in Devon, Plymouth and Torbay enter Apprenticeships. These young people express a high level of interest in Apprenticeships in construction, engineering, ICT and the Arts, media and publishing, but experience limited opportunities to progress due to a lack of supply. So how do we get more employers engaged in Apprenticeships, particularly in sectors of high interest and limited availability?

While raising education and skills levels remains vital, national financial circumstances are such that we have to ask whether a continuing focus on qualifications supply and meeting targets is, in itself, enough? More people consider themselves to be over-qualified and to possess skills that their employers do not use than consider themselves under-qualified. Driving up qualification and skill levels will not improve competitiveness if employers do not take advantage of these skills and use them to move towards increasingly knowledge-intensive, high-value-added product market positions. But do employers, or enough employers, have this aspiration and the leadership and management talents required to make the most of the 'world class' skills we are committed to supply?

- How, given the presence of the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth and four leading FE colleges, can we engage these employers in making the most of the skills that are already available?

- The extent to which young people are aware of career paths and job opportunities that are open to them, the skills they will require and the progression routes they should take to make the most of these opportunities is questionable. Could more be done to raise young peoples' awareness of local opportunities? Could employers do more to manage young peoples' expectations and aspirations relating to employment?

- Skills gaps have increased significantly between 2007 and 2009. The prevalence of generic skills gaps and skills gaps among new recruits suggests that skills gaps are either transient or result from a mismatch between employers expectations and the skills that new recruits, particularly young people, bring with them. This raises two questions:

    - whether there is more that might be done pre-employment to match the skills that providers are teaching to those in employment?

    - and whether there is more that could be done with employers to generate realistic expectations and to develop their capacity to support young peoples' development as they enter the world of work?

PLYMOUTH WORK AND SKILLS 2010 DISCUSSION BRIEF

FEEDBACK FORM

Plymouth Employment and Skills Board would welcome your views on the issues and questions raised in the discussion brief. This feedback form invites your comments. Please either use the form or other means to provide comments in response to the questions below and return to info@plymouthesb.co.uk . Responses are requested by 10 September 2010.

1. The population is ageing, whilst fewer young people are entering the labour market. What are likley to be the implications for your organisation and its services?
2. Where will the new employment growth come from and what should we do to support it? What are the threats and opportunities arising from public sector cuts?

3. What more can we do to tackle worklessness in the area?
4. Does Plymouth have the right skills to meet government targets and employers' needs? How do we encourage greater take up of apprenticeships?
5. Please highlight any other issues you think we've missed?