

COST OF LIVING**UPDATE ON WORK STREAMS AS AT 9th JUNE 2016**

WORK STREAMS	CURRENT POSITION
<p>(a) Working with young people in schools to provide better careers advice and to raise awareness as to what is available in the local economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EHOD ESB has the following position statement on Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance “Individuals particularly Young People and their parents need to have greater confidence that information and advice is independent and up-to-date. The quality of careers education advice information and guidance in schools and colleges continues to be widely criticised. Advice and guidance needs to be freely accessible so that every individual can make informed decisions and navigate the increasingly complex routes to education, training and work”. More information can be found on www.GreaterExeterSkills.com. • HoSW LEP have commissioned Careers South West (via Rosie Bates DCC) to develop a set of Career Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) standards for schools. Exeter & Heart of Devon Employment and Skills Board (EHOS ESB) contributed to this set of standards which now state that CEIAG should always be given with the best interests of the individual which may not be the case for the institution giving the advice. • EHOD ESB Employers are working on the development of World Class Work Experience placements for school age students. These will be accredited through the national standard “Industrial Cadets”. They are being piloted in April/May/June. The eight employers involved in the pilot are committed to the provision of stretching, higher level, specialist skills one week work placements which will add a very valuable insight to the local employment mix and opportunity. [Please consider this as part of the KES below too]. • EHOD ESB are collaborating with Education Business Partnership – SW (EBP-SW) and the Careers Enterprise Company to deliver the

	<p>Enterprise Advisor Service. EBP-SW are recruiting Enterprise Advisors from business to help schools create a successful enterprise and careers strategy that will help young people develop crucial employability skills in preparation for work after education. Enterprise Advisors will be asked to volunteer 8 hours of time each month. This could be meeting with the school, research and sharing information remotely, brokering relationships with other employers or even working directly with students to provide inspirational talks, mock interviews, careers guidance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EHOD ESB are actively promoting the Go Construct website and school experience matching service which enables schools to arrange experiences for students and staff within the construction sector at all levels. • EHOD ESB have prioritised the improvement of Employer Education links. Greater interchange between students, schools, teachers, employers etc can only enhance career decisions and the local economy.
<p>(b) Skills agenda relating to productivity (Knowledge Economy Strategy).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EHOD ESB designed and ran the highly successful and pivotal ‘Unlocking Big Data – Investing in Human Capital’ event in January 2015 at the Met Office. The legacy of this event is still being felt. In 2016, under the proposed rebranding of ‘Greater Exeter Skills’, we are keen to create a similarly significant event around ‘Productivity’. We would like to take the good practice from 2015 and better it by holding the event at the Met Office in Exeter, by using the interactive real-time participant input and analysis model, and by creating a knowledge and values led inspirational day. Funding is being sought. • Mark Shepherd (EHOD ESB Chair) is working with Chris Evans (Exeter University) and Richard Ball on Innovation Exeter and he is also a member of the HoSW LEP People Group – this joins up a number of initiatives and groups.

- The intervention of the EHOD ESB when the University of Exeter suggested that they could no longer support Big Bang SW was instrumental in securing the event for the city for 2016 and 2017. However, funding from Engineering UK has been reduced and more sponsorship will need to be sought. We are working with the University of Exeter and Education Business Partnership South West to incorporate Big Bang SW into the wider Innovation Exeter initiative.
[http://nearme.thebigbangfair.co.uk/South West/](http://nearme.thebigbangfair.co.uk/SouthWest/)
- Digital skills are seen as key to improved productivity. EHOD ESB are piloting a Digital Apprenticeship carousel model (where the apprentice learns/works for a number of employers) in partnership with Exeter College and Cosmic. In addition we have and will continue to promote the degree apprenticeship a BSc in Digital and Technology Solutions at the University of Exeter (the first Russell Group university to offer an apprenticeships degree) at our 'Tap in to Top Talent' business breakfast as part of National Apprenticeship 2016. This event was well attended and received and focused on STEM industries and higher and degree level apprenticeships.
- Apprenticeships at all levels are being promoted by HMG and funding streams for other routes reduced. EHOD ESB worked with DCC, National Apprenticeship Service and Exeter College to deliver NAW 2016 in EHOD.
- EHOD ESB are working with Education Business Partnership – SW on the STEM. Please see this link as an example agenda
<http://greaterexeterskills.com/tag/STEM/>
- Members of the EHOD ESB are all committed to progressing this through their own networks.

(c) Grants – liaising with LEP to ensure that the Council make the most of any available grants and funding.

- EHOD ESB has attended and contributed to HoSW LEP specific funding meetings on Employment & Skills generally and with special regard to Digital and Construction. We continue to make the case for Exeter and the Heart of Devon in documents which have had a clear focus on Plymouth and Hinkley. We have convened member meetings including a well attended event (56 delegates) at the Corn Exchange on 21 July 2015 to discuss priorities.
- within the ESIF opportunities and agreed a collaborative rather than competitive approach. We will support partner organisations with proposals which complement our mission. Unfortunately significant delays with European, Skills Funding Agency and Hinkley have had severe effects on the capacity and capability of our training providers.
- We receive the HoSW LEP updates and newsletters with ESIF and other funding updates but our focus is on Employment & Skills. EHOD ESB is not on the 'look out' for infrastructure, capital or any other funding opportunity from which ECC may be able to benefit.
- Funding is an issue. We can only deliver where funding is available. EHOD ESB will always be proactive and opportunistic about looking for funding.
- In addition we provide some level of influence and direction.

Exeter is working with neighbouring local authorities to roll out business support across East Devon, Mid Devon and Teignbridge. If successful, this will be the subject of a grant application to the LEP for match funding to increase the level of business support available.

(provided by Partnerships & Project Manager,
Economy & Tourism Department)

<p>(d) Availability of financial advice – it was suggested that the private and voluntary sectors could work together to achieve this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability and access to affordable credit. - Debt Strategy – to look at the immediate future as more families need access to more finance. 	<p>Funding for Local Welfare Support ceased on 31.03.2016, however we have sufficient budget left to continue providing crisis support for this year. It has also allowed us to continue funding the Exeter Money Advice Project (EMAP) with CAB and Homemaker SW for a further year.</p> <p>That project is about to trial a new approach with customers whereby case working is undertaken jointly by CAB/Homemaker SW and a Senior Collection Officer from our Payments & Collection Team, so that at the stage where the customer can be considered as 'fixed', the Senior Collection Officer continues to case work the customer in order to bring about behaviour change, so that hopefully the customer doesn't go back into arrears.</p> <p>Since the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) in Exeter in November 2015, we have had a partnership agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to provide some support services to UC claimants including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for claimants to make their UC claim online • Personal budgeting support to manage a single monthly payment <p>Where necessary, we draw on our EMAP colleagues to assist us with this. This arrangement will be reviewed ahead of the full digital rollout of UC, and will only continue if sufficient funding is made available by DWP. So far, even with low numbers of claims and the most straightforward of cases, dealing with Universal Credit customers is taking significant resources within the Benefits and Welfare, Customer Services and Payment and Collection teams.</p> <p>With regard to procuring the services of a credit union, one tender submission has been received which is currently being evaluated.</p> <p>As part of their work in compiling an overall picture of debt, the Payment & Collection Team have been looking at Council Tax arrears and which group has the largest debt.</p>
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Initial information shows that of all the cases that have council tax to pay and receive no council tax support, only 9% are in arrears. Of the cases that get maximum 80% council tax support (working age only), 33% are in arrears. The most worrying statistic though is the cases that get some council tax support but not the full 80%. Again this is working age only, and 70% of those cases are in arrears. The amount that those cases owe is very low (£191k) compared to the amount owed by people not getting any council tax support (£1.6m), but it indicates they are struggling to pay, and of course it will be those cases that will take the most time and resources from staff. More work is being carried out in this area, which will be shared with the Cost of Living Forum once completed.

The revised Benefit Cap is due to come into force this year. Introduced in 2013, the benefit cap places a limit on how much a household can receive in welfare benefits. Households with disabled family members are excluded, as are those entitled to Working Tax Credit. When introduced in 2013 the level was set with reference to average earnings. From some point in 2016/17 the limit will be reduced from £26,000 per year to £20,000 (£500 per week down to £385). We anticipate up to 100 households in Exeter will see a reduction in their Housing Benefit entitlement. We are still waiting for a list from DWP, now due to be provided later in May 2016, of potentially affected cases. Once we have this information we will begin work to mitigate the impacts on these families ahead of the introduction of the cut, expected in November 2016. Our Discretionary Housing Payments allowance has been increased by 14% (£20,311) this year to help us support those customers who are affected for the first time or who will see their benefit income drop for a second time in three years. Affected households are mostly larger families with at least three children, in rented accommodation and with little or no work history. These customers often require a large amount of support from officers over an extended period of time to remove themselves from the effects of the cap. Exemptions for carers are expected to be introduced before the lower cap applies.

(provided by System Lead Finance Officer, Customer Access)