

Scrutiny Bulletin: January 2022

Title of Update: Skills Update

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## 1. What is the update about?

This update is about the skills and employment work within the Net Zero and Business Team. This includes - Skills Strategy 2021-22, Exeter Works, Kickstart, Building Greater Exeter and Inspiring Girls. This bulletin will also build on the Members Briefing held in September 2021.

## 2. Background

### Exeter Skills Strategy 2021-22

Executive and full council approved the current Skills Strategy in March / April 2020, which covers the city of Exeter. Over the past 12 months some of the proposed work has continued, but due to the circumstances resulting from the pandemic some of the priorities have been adjusted in line with those identified in the City Council's recovery plan, Building Exeter Back Better.

### Exeter Works

The Exeter Works initiative is part of the recovery activity in response to the pandemic. The Skills Advisory Group that support the delivery of the Skills Strategy, concluded that providing support to those people who would be or have been made redundant because of the pandemic would be incredibly important, particularly with the use and eventual termination of the furlough scheme. The Council has been working in partnership with Exeter Chamber since summer 2020 to develop and deliver Exeter Works. In addition the Council has worked in partnership with Devon County Council who are operating the DWP funded Youth Hub service from the Exeter Works Hub.

### Kickstart

The Council successfully became a Kickstart Gateway in autumn 2020.

The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to employers to create new 6-month job placements for young people ages 16-24, who are currently on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. Specifically, within the sphere of wider employment schemes, Kickstart focusses on employability enhancement for young people, with wraparound skills training to be significant parts of all placements.

As a Gateway, our role is to support local businesses at every stage of their application, through to their working with a young person in a Kickstart placement.

The Kickstart Scheme closed to applications on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021, the last start date for a Kickstart placement is 31 March 2022.

### Inspiring Girls

The Inspiring Girls (Exeter) project, founded 2 years ago is a joint initiative between the Council, the Heart of the South West Careers Hub and local businessperson, Sarah Abrahams. It is designed to provide additional support for girls in year nine (aged 13-14) in our secondary schools, through a programme of mentoring, workshop and workplace visits. Due to the restrictions placed

on schools through the pandemic, a pilot of the mentoring took place during spring term 2021 with approximately 20 girls participating. Following feedback from everyone involved, the programme has been developed and a further iteration delivered in autumn 2021.

### Building Greater Exeter

Building Greater Exeter was set up in October 2018 to support the local construction sector. The area covered includes Exeter, East Devon and Teignbridge. The City Council employ, on a temporary contract, a Project Manager to lead on Building Greater Exeter activity.

There are three main areas of focus:

- 1) Inspire the future workforce through an effective engagement programme with schools and young people
- 2) Support employers with recruitment and upskilling
- 3) 'Employment and Skills Plans' on all major developments

## 3. Current position

### Exeter Skills Strategy 2021-22

Work has been continuing over the past few months to deliver against the priority actions within the Skills Strategy. Through regular engagement with partners, stakeholders, the business community, along with our own monitoring of the available data, and because of the pandemic on the city, it is apparent that a revised Skills Strategy is required.

In line with the action plan attached to the current strategy, a number of actions have been delivered against the identified priorities, these include;

Supporting our Young People – through continued work with the Careers Hub, delivery of the Inspiring Girls (Exeter) project, undertaking the role of a Gateway organisation for the Kickstart programme

Inclusion – the delivery of Exeter Works and its associated activity, Gateway organisation for the Kickstart programme

Vacancy and Recruitment Issues – support for businesses and individuals through Exeter Works, monitoring of data and working collaboratively to assess solutions.

Support for Sectors – delivery on Building Greater Exeter initiative, working collaboratively with Tech Exeter and Proud 2 Care.

We are currently in the process of commissioning an organisation to work with the Net Zero & Business team to analyse relevant data sets, to develop the strategy and to lead on the partner, business and stakeholder consultation. This will include working with ECC and Exeter College on a joint event planned for February.

### Exeter Works

The Exeter Works initiative launched its website [www.exeterworks.org](http://www.exeterworks.org) in late October 2020, and the Hub opened in the former Tourist Information Centre in Dix's Field on 21 April 2021.

The Hub is a space that is available for a range of partners and organisations to use in order to provide advice and guidance in relation to jobs, careers and training to anyone who wants it, regardless of their circumstances.

Youth Hub Devon, a service funded by DWP and delivered by Devon County Council has operated from the Hub since summer 2021. The service has two full time members of staff who work with

young people aged 16-24, mainly claiming Universal Credit, and support them with job searching and accessing education and training.

Exeter Works has been contacted by 209 people (21/4/21 – 30/11/21), 150 of whom have been referred to a partner organisations, including the youth hub; over 70 have attended an appointment in the hub.

The Youth Hub service have had 148 young people referred to the service to date, 89 of these have received a full needs assessment with 40% of those supported progressing in to some form of employment or training. This is against a target of 200 to be engaged, with 30% progressing.

### Kickstart

Since the City Council became a Gateway for Kickstart, 181 placements approved in total by DWP on our grant agreement. The council receives £300 for every placement start; this funding has been used to fund a part time Kickstart co-ordinator to support the scheme and businesses.

The current data in relation to the employers the council is working with is as follows;

- 91 Starts, 14 of which have left their placements early for a variety of reasons.
- 36 placements will have completed by the end of December. Seven of these have been retained by their employer in either a full or a part time capacity.
- Employers removed 46 Placements, some of these were allocated to other employers who had demand for placements, and others were withdrawn from the scheme.

There are currently 30 placements being advertised, which will need to be filled by 31 March 2022.

The City Council have also participated in Kickstart, which are included in the figures above. More specifically, the City Council had 12 placements approved within the following services:

- RAMM – 2 placements complete in January, 1 currently being advertised
- Environmental Health – 2 placements, neither able to be filled
- Public and Green Space – 3 placements, 1 filled and 2 withdrawn
- Harbour Master – 2 placements, 1 filled, 1 available
- Liveable Exeter – 1 placement, unable to fill
- Car Parking – 1 filled and placement completed

Throughout the past 12 months we have worked closely with the local job centre, work coaches and more latterly the Youth Hub to fill the placements we have had approved as a Gateway. There have been a number of challenges with the programme, which have included;

- A mismatch between the expectations of the roles created and the skills / calibre of the young people,
- Lack of young people with the skills required for available placements,
- Supply of placements outweighing demand,
- Significant amount of admin burden on employers, even with the support of a Gateway organisation.

### Inspiring Girls

The Inspiring Girls (Exeter) project has successfully applied for funding from the Howmet Aerospace Foundation. This will support the delivery of the project in the current and next (2022/23) academic years, including co-ordination, communications and workshops.

A cohort of mentoring was delivered in autumn term 2021. This was primarily delivered face to face in 6 out of 8 schools signed up to the programme, 27 girls have participated. The remaining two schools have struggled to accommodate the project unfortunately due to COVID affecting staff capacity.

The project team are now planning for the spring term with a combination of mentoring and workshops scheduled to take place.

### Building Greater Exeter

Building Greater Exeter has recently released its review of the past 12 months you can find this [here](#).

The team have been working hard to continue to deliver activities and support to schools – keeping the profile of construction high within the minds of young people. They have also been delivering face-to-face support to people interested in jobs and careers in construction by running the ‘Construction Job Shop’ every Wednesday in the Exeter Works Hub.

There is currently a marketing campaign planned for the new year to encourage young people (aged 16-24) to consider course, jobs and careers in construction, this will feature role models within the industry locally talking about what they do and why they love it!

In addition, working with four of our project partners and Exeter Science Park, we are running a competition for primary schools to design and build a ‘Building of the Future’ for Exeter from Lego. This will be part of the exhibition running at RAMM in the summer, with the winning design featuring in the exhibition. The funding we have secured will allow us to supply LEGO kits to 30 primary schools.

There is also significant work underway with all of our project partners to set the priorities for the next financial year.

## 4. Future position

### Net Zero & Business team focus

From a committee report endorsed by Executive (6 July 2021) and Council (21 July 2021), the name of the team changed from Growth & Commercialisation to Net Zero & Business. The focus of the team going forward is on the delivery of net zero for the City Council and supporting Exeter City Futures in delivery the Net Zero Exeter 2030 plan, as well as supporting business and residents, the city centre and commercialisation.

Going forward the team that supports businesses, residents and skills will focus on clean growth, as well as inclusive growth and social mobility. The greening of the City’s economy will play a major role going forward, to support the delivery of net zero & the Net Zero Exeter 2030 Plan.

### Exeter Skills Strategy

A revised Exeter Skills Strategy will be developed and presented to Executive in April 2022. The revised strategy will have a focus on challenges the city is facing at present and in the future, to support both businesses and residents.

### Exeter Works

Discussions are currently underway with key partners and stakeholders to discuss the operation of the Hub from 1 April 2022. This will need investment from across the partnership; a small budget has been allocated from the existing Net Zero & Business budget to support this activity in the next financial year.

The partnership between the City Council and Exeter Chamber in relation to the project will also be reviewed and plans developed in relation to the future direction for Exeter Works.

To keep up to date with Exeter Works, you can follow our relevant social media;

Twitter [https://twitter.com/Exeter\\_Works](https://twitter.com/Exeter_Works)

Facebook [Exeter Works - Home | Facebook](#)

LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/exeter-works/>

Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/exeterworks/>

If you would like to be added to the partner newsletter, please email [hello@exeterworks.org](mailto:hello@exeterworks.org)

### Kickstart

The next stages of Kickstart for the City Council will be to:

- Evaluate our role as a Gateway with feedback from the employers and young people that we have worked with,
- Monitor and measure the progress of young people on completion of their placements, referring to the Youth Hub where needed,
- Fill as many of our remaining available placements as possible.

### Inspiring Girls

The Inspiring Girls project team will be focussing on the following activities in the short term;

- Matching mentors and mentees for the programme in the spring and summer term
- Planning workshops for the spring term
- Ensuring all mentors have DBS checks in place
- Planning for an event in the summer term

Alongside this, the team will also be planning for the next academic year, putting in place a dedicated web presence and communications plan for the project. There will also be ongoing evaluation and engagement with the schools to define the future direction for the project.

### Building Greater Exeter

There is currently consultation underway with all project partners to set the priorities for the next financial year and to establish the budget that will be available to develop and deliver activities. Once all feedback is gathered a revised project plan will be produced that will form the work plan for the next 12 months.

## 5. Are there any other options?

These have been explored as part of the work around the Exeter Skills Strategy.

## 6. Conclusion

There is a great deal of work currently underway to support the workforce and residents of Exeter to ensure that they have the best possible access to all the opportunities for employment and skills development in the city.

The team continue to work with a wide range of partners to ensure that this work continues, that the economy can flourish and everyone can play their part.