

## Paper for Council for Economic Renewal

### Summary of DfES Skills Offer

- We want to build deeper relationships with Anchor Companies in Wales.
- It is important that we understand fully the skills needs of Anchor companies if we are to provide the solutions to improve their potential for effective recruitment and investment in training.
- This will, in turn, set quality standards for their supply chains to do the same.
- The availability of intelligence and information on skill needs will enable more effective planning of skills provision.
- This is not an end in itself. In return for this one-to-one relationship to meet their skills needs, we want Anchor Companies to invest in training, to create opportunities for young people to access apprenticeships, and to move up the 'value chain' in the quality of jobs provided.

### DfES Skills Offer

#### Advice, guidance and information

1. **Senior DfES officials** will, working closely with BETS, meet with each Anchor Company on a regular basis to better understand their skills needs and to lead on the provision of support to meet those skills needs.
2. The **Workforce Development Programme** provides direct support to employers whereby they can access a broad range of services to improve the skills of the workforce.
3. **HRD Advisors** will be available to support Anchor Companies as required to source and broker appropriate provision that meets the needs of the business. We recognise that many Anchor Companies will have in-house HR expertise, so the HRD Advisor offer will seek only to add value where and if required. We currently contract with approximately 90 advisers, all registered to liP and SFEDI standards.

**Contact: John Jones, Head of Business Skills, DfES**

4. Using the **Investors in People** framework, HRD Advisors will work with Anchor Companies as required to improve performance through the development of effective HR strategies leading to high performance working. Of particular importance will be the availability of HRD advisers to support individual company development within the existing and potential supply chain to drive High Performance Working and improvement in quality standards.

**Contact: John Jones, Head of Business Skills, Ruth Parry, Senior Business Skills Manager, DfES**

### **Training linked to recruitment**

5. Where an Anchor business has a need to recruit large numbers, or where there is a specific sector/geographical need, targeted pre-recruitment training arrangements can be arranged to meet employer need. An example of where this has worked very well is with Admiral who previously had problems with suitability of candidates and large numbers of applications. The multi-agency support provided has reduced the cost and recruitment burden for Admiral whilst, at the same time, enabling unemployed individuals access to the job opportunity. Through **Traineeships** and **Steps to Employment** programmes, we are improving the employability of the existing and future workforce by supporting young people and adults to enhance their employability skills.

**Contact: Nick Lee, Head of Youth Engagement and Employment, Bon Westcott- lead on Adult Employment, DfES**

6. Manifesto commitment to **Jobs Growth Wales**: jobs will be for a 6-month period, paid at or above the National Minimum Wage, for a minimum of 25 hours per week. Proposals will be closely linked to an extended Skills Growth Wales programme to ensure a strong focus on private sector employers and provide the link between job opportunity and the unemployed.

**Contact: Nick Lee, Head of Youth Engagement and Employment, DfES**

7. **ReAct II**: employers who recruit an individual who has been made redundant within the previous 6 months can receive the following support: recruitment subsidy of up to £3,000, and reimbursement of 50% of the cost of any necessary training up to a maximum of £1,000. While the private and third sectors can receive support from ReAct, public sector workers can access support from Adapt.

**Contact: Nigel Arnold, Head of Employability Response, DfES**

8. **Employer Pledge/Basic Skills**: Quality assured providers will work with the Anchor Company to assess need and deliver tailor made training to address identified need on basic skills provision. The Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF) is building capacity within the union movement to maximise learning engagement with both individuals and employers and has a key focus on improving basic skills in the workplace.

**Contact: Cath Jenkins, Head of Employability, Gary Jones, Senior Youth Engagement and Employment Manager, DfES**

### **Apprenticeships**

9. The DfES Apprenticeship programme is shaping and developing apprenticeships to: drive up skills to meet the needs of employers, enhance business competitiveness and productivity levels, meet the personal development potential of the workforce, and to increase take up of apprenticeships by young people.

**Contact: Sam Huckle, Head of Apprenticeship Policy, DfES**

10. Anchor Companies are able to recruit apprentices and receive the full range of support as contracted out via our approved Work Based Learning Provider network. **£2m has been ringfenced for 2011-12 to deliver**

**support for Anchor Companies.** We have developed proposals to support Anchor Companies with Apprenticeship recruitment at reduced cost.

11. **Pathways to Apprenticeships:** Support will be provided to enable Anchor Companies to work with FE colleges to recruit young people who have completed a one-year, full-time, intensive FE learning programme during which they will achieve a Level 2 vocational qualification from within an apprenticeship framework. They are then eligible for accelerated completion of an Apprenticeship with an employer.
12. **Young Recruits:** Businesses who take on additional apprentices (16 – 24 age group) are able to access a £50 per week wage subsidy per individual. This will be of particular interest to companies able to recruit and train for “stock” relevant to supply chain needs.
13. Our on-line Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service was rolled out as an all-Wales pilot on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2011. It allows employers and training providers to advertise vacancies on-line, and potential Apprentices are able to search for Apprenticeship vacancies, and apply for them, on line.

**Flexible Bespoke Support:**

14. **Leadership and Management training** is a key area to create demand for skills investment within the private sector. We can offer support to build the management team within individual companies or work with supply chains to develop specific programmes of support. We offer selective and discretionary funding that contributes 50% towards the cost of training. Provision is sourced from the open market and funding available is up to £50,000 a year. Workshop provision is available tailored to the individual needs of the Anchor subject to numbers making provision viable. Funding is only limited by state aid regulations and is subsidised through the approved Provider network. Funding soon available to support the training of mentors and coaches linked to the BETS Business Mentoring programme.
15. **General Discretionary funding:** funding to support the implementation of non-Leadership and management training that will develop the capability of Anchor Companies. Funding contributes 50% towards the costs of training up to a maximum of £20,000 a year.  
**Contact: John Jones, Head of Business Skills, Sion Meredith, Senior Leadership and Management Programme Manager, DfES**
16. **Skills Growth Wales:** Ministers have announced the continuation of the Skills Growth Wales programme, focusing on strategically important businesses and those businesses with the opportunity to grow and provide additional employment opportunities. Higher levels of funding available than other bespoke options.  
**Contact: John Jones, Head of Business Skills, Simon Cartwright, Senior Manager Skills Growth Wales, DfES**

**DfES Sector Approach:**

17. We are fully committed to a sector based approach to skills development and will actively work with BETS to meet the skills needs articulated by Sector Panels.
  
18. The **Sector Priority Project Fund (SPFP)** programme is designed to inform and influence policy and delivery systems in Wales, led by Sector Skills Councils. Successful approaches can potentially be mainstreamed. The current programme ends in December 2011 but DfES is finalising plans for a new Sector Programme from 2012 to continue to create and test innovative approaches to meeting employer demand across sectors.

**Contact: Meurig Thomas, Head of Sector Policy and Programme, DfES**