



Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel



Trackers Apprentice Programme

Presented to the States on 18th July 2014

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1. CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

After being elected as Chairman of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel earlier this year, I along with my fellow Panel members needed to consider a work programme to include forthcoming legislation and policy matters in both departments. The Panel became aware that concerns were being raised over the availability of spaces on vocational courses within the Trackers Apprenticeship programme which in a relatively short period seemed to be a victim of its own success. The Panel soon decided that a review to investigate the benefits of the scheme and whether it was sufficiently resourced could add value to this relatively new initiative.

I, along with the Connétables of both St. Martin and St. Saviour were extremely interested in gaining a full understanding of the mechanics of this new scheme. I hope all that read this report appreciate the need for the provision of adequate and quality apprenticeships to support a local economy that shows signs of improving and needing skilled, locally qualified staff in all sectors.



Connétable S.W. Pallett
Chairman, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

2. PANEL MEMBERSHIP

Connétable S.W. Pallett, Chairman

Connétable M.P.S. Le Troquer

Connétable S.A. Rennard

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

It is the intention of the Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel to hold a review to establish:

1. That points of principle and detail within Trackers Apprentice Programme meet the requirements of the Island by:
 - i. Comparing the programme alongside the Strategic Plan
 - ii. Confirming the benefits of the programme for those enrolled within it and those attempting to obtain an apprenticeship.
 - iii. Establishing that the programme adds value to the community
2. To consider the funding model for the programme.
 - i. To establish the 'weighting' for funding being applied by the Minister for ESC.
 - ii. To establish if there is a need, scope or support for additional funding.
3. The Panel will present its findings to the States of Jersey.

4. KEY FINDINGS

Key Finding 1:

The mentors are key to the success of this scheme. (10.8)

Key Finding 2:

The Panel has found evidence to suggest that Highlands College and University Campus may require additional funding to provide a modern training provider. (12.9)

Key Finding 3:

The Trackers Apprenticeship Programme is in danger of becoming a victim of its own success by outrunning the budget previously made available. This would be to the detriment of the apprentices, local industry and the Island in general. (15.7)

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

The Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel, established after the 2014 elections, should undertake a review into the funding, campus and course provision at Highlands College. (12.10)

Recommendation 2:

The States of Jersey should support a request for further funding within the next Medium Term Financial Plan. (15.8)

6. INTRODUCTION

- 6.1 The Panel understood there may be concerns in relation to the availability of places in trade vocational courses. This inspired initial enquiries into the policies of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture in relation to training for the youth of the Island entering the workplace. Particular interest was focussed in the Trackers Apprentice Programme which was understood to be a new initiative to support just such groups. It was considered that Scrutiny of this subject may add value by bringing the scheme into the public spotlight and ensuring that the importance of support for effective schemes that support local people entering the workplace is understood.
- 6.2 Initial investigations suggested to the Panel that the Trackers Programme ran the risk of becoming the victim of its own success by being oversubscribed and overstressing its budget. The Panel decided to undertake a review to establish the facts.
- 6.3 The terms of reference (as above) were agreed to establish that the programme met the needs of the Island and that the funding model for the programme was sufficient for the future. Scoping documents were drawn up and approved by the Chairmen's Committee. The review was launched.
- 6.4 The Panel extends its thanks to the Department of Education, Sport and Culture, for its assistance in circulating an invitation to apprentices within the programme to talk to the Panel regarding the benefits or otherwise of the scheme. A private meeting was held with two apprentices who provided frank and open opinions of the scheme. This meeting was held at a less formal venue than the States Buildings and was in the evening to assist the apprentices in finding the opportunity to attend.
- 6.5 The Panel held a public hearing with the Jersey Construction Council which was represented by the Chairman of the Jersey Construction Council, Education, Training and Professional Development sub-committee.
- 6.6 The Panel held a public hearing with the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture on 9th June 2014.

7. WHAT IS TRACKERS?

7.1 The Trackers Apprentice Programme was commenced in 2012 as an initiative within the Department of Education, Sport and Culture which offers islanders over 16yrs old apprenticeships from 18 months to 4 or 5 years in duration dependant on the trade or profession.

7.2 The scheme involves partnerships between

- i) Apprentice
- ii) Employer
- iii) Mentor
- iv) Trainers

7.3 This programme is designed to provide support for motivated individuals wanting to enter the workplace in specific areas. It was initially designed to provide support for the 16-19 year olds but has expanded to incorporate more mature students involved in career changes or obtaining qualifications in areas such as health care.

7.4 Trackers was designed to provide 120 places over three years. There are currently 126 candidates within the first two years and further recruiting is taking place now for new places.¹ The numbers represent a rolling programme over the training period of the various apprenticeships contained within the scheme.

¹ Hearing with ESC Minister 9th June 2014 Page 3.

8. THE APPRENTICE

- 8.1 The programme is for those who are of the quality needed by the islands employers. There is a need to be motivated and keen to obtain a place on the Trackers Programme. The application process has been designed to provide evidence that the applicant is sufficiently keen and has the requisite qualities.
- 8.2 However, there are those who are not ready to meet those criteria for various reasons. It may be appropriate to label them as a group who are not 'work-ready'. Frequently, this is due to immaturity or other issues that the individual moves on from. The Department has introduced a 'Foundation Programme' designed to provide a one year course to take the student further forward to being 'work-ready'.
- 8.3 Initially, it was decided that 120 students over three years was realistic. Following the experience of running for two years, the Department now consider that there is a need to grow the programme to 350 by 2017.²
- 8.4 The Panel advertised for apprentices on the scheme to talk to the Panel. This was done with the full support of the Department; in fact, the Department circulated the advertisement to the apprentices on the Panel's behalf. Two apprentices came forward and met with Panel Members in an informal atmosphere at the Jersey Art Centre on the evening of 4th June 2014.
- 8.5 Both the apprentices came from differing backgrounds and had very different and specific needs from an apprenticeship. One was changing his career from the finance industry to the electrical trade. The other was a care assistant who needed qualifications in her work.
- 8.6 Both were near to the end of their apprenticeship period and were enthusiastic about the overall provision of service the programme had delivered. They were enthusiastic about the quality of the training provided by Highlands College and were particularly keen about the system of mentors. Both considered that particular aspect of the scheme to be the key reason for the high success rate it has achieved. They gave an

² Hearing with ESC Minister 9th June 2014 Page 13.

insight into the detailed work the mentors undertake and the high level of practical and moral support provided.

9. MENTORS

- 9.1 Mentors are staff employed specifically for the role by the Department of Education, Sport and Culture. It is this area that requires the largest part of the programme's budget. The positions are full time and pay rolled by the States of Jersey through the Department of Education, Sport and Culture.
- 9.2 Mentors have a line manager within the department, through the normal route up to the Director of Education, Sport and Culture and on to the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture.
- 9.3 The whole point of the mentor is that they are not industry-specific. They are there as facilitators and need to be independent. They have diverse and widely differing backgrounds.
- 9.4 The caseload of the mentors is one mentor to 25 apprentices. There are five full time mentors with a further two currently being recruited.³
- 9.5 The detailed work of the Mentors was outlined during the hearing with the Minister. It may of course, be considered folly to rely solely on the word of the Minister and his team when examining the product of his policies. The Panel concurs with that completely and therefore considers the views of those undertaking the course to hold greater weight evidentially. The following comments were from the apprentices that the Panel spoke to and were far more telling:

"They [the Mentors] work on adding value to what we do."

"The Mentors are the most motivated people I have met."

"Students failing is not an option for the Mentors."

"They are great, I am blown away."⁴

- 9.6 It was clear that mentors meet the students regularly on a one to one basis; they hold meetings with the employers and trainers and deal with all aspects of the training

³ Hearing with ESC Minister 9th June 2014 Page 12.

⁴ Meeting with Apprentices 4th June 2014.

needs as they arise. Further to that, they act on needs as they crop up, assist the student with study progression and dealing with any problems relating to life skills as they arise.

9.7 They provide very rounded support and act as the oil in the system, encouraging significantly more communication between all parties than may have been the case in the past. This prompt, pro-active approach to issues prevents the development of misunderstandings and roadblocks that may otherwise develop within the system of providing apprenticeships for, in the main, young people.

9.8 Key Finding 1:

The mentors are key to the success of this scheme.

10. EMPLOYERS

10.1 The Department liaises closely with employers. The Manager of the programme meets regularly with the Construction Council and works together with their Training Subcommittee to develop a plan to meet the future needs of the industry. This was stated during the hearing with the Minister and confirmed when the Panel spoke with the Chairman of the Training and Professional Development Subcommittee of the Jersey Construction Council.⁵

10.2 The ongoing message from various sectors of local industry is that employers need quality individuals to enter the apprenticeship schemes. Maintaining the quality of apprentices within the Trackers Programme is achieved through the selection process and has ensured that the employers remain supportive and involved because they are receiving keen students who are prepared to do their best in the workplace to achieve the standards required of them. To quote the Chairman of the Training and Professional Development Subcommittee of the Jersey Construction Council when he was describing the foremost need of employers:

“Quality over quantity.”

10.3 Mentors keep in regular contact with the employers, maintaining the balance, ensuring a structured approach to the work environment by the employer and stimulating (where necessary) continued effort from the apprentice. This prevents problems such as an apprentice spending four years bending conduit, for example, or issues of poor timekeeping etc.

10.4 One example provided to the Panel was that Mentors engaged with employers and prevented overnight working by staff in the Caring Industry on nights prior to study days. A simple arrangement that produces the best performance in classrooms which in turn leads to increased prospects of success within the training by students.

⁵ Hearing of 28th May 2014.

11. THE TRAINING

11.1 The training aspect of the apprenticeships offers the technical skills that form the foundation of the work undertaken in the workplace. The Panel heard that the lecturers providing the subject skills are of high quality and well respected because they know their subjects so well.

11.2 The equipment that provided for the in class training was described as adequate although the buildings were described as 'tired'. The Panel noticed that the Students perceived a need for Highlands College to provide more courses and more lecturers with a greater variety of courses.

11.3 The Panel also heard that some classes were too large. Twenty students in a class, where there was a large diversity of age and ability, seemed to be too many for one lecturer.

11.4 This concern was echoed by the Chairman of the Training and Professional Development Subcommittee of the Jersey Construction Council, who described his view of Highlands as:

"...they are bulging at the seams up there..."⁶

"Again, we will come back to it, we have got to make sure that they have got the facilities there [Highlands] fit for purpose to then receive those children and make sure that they are in the right environment to learn and develop."⁷

11.5 He went on to state that the States need to invest in the training provider and in Highlands College to give them the facilities they need to take people through the system.

⁶ Hearing with Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council. Page 25.

⁷ Hearing with Chairman, Training and Professional Development Subcommittee, Jersey Construction Council. Page 27.

11.6 This left the Panel questioning whether:

- Highlands was large enough to deliver the diversity and quality of courses it aspires to provide,
- The Campus is physically suitable and
- The college is funded adequately

to provide the Island with the quality training and education expected of a modern training provider.

11.7 Further, the Minister pointed out that every time there is a recession, the numbers at Highlands increased substantially. However, as things improve following the recession, the numbers do not go down.⁸ The Director of Education, Sport and Culture advised the Panel that funding for a new skills centre was laid out within the Capital Development Plan.⁹

11.8 Clearly, examination of these questions would take the Panel outside the terms of reference for this review and therefore the questions were not followed up on this occasion. The Panel notes that this is the subject for a scrutiny review in the future.

11.9 Key Finding 2:

The Panel has found evidence to suggest that Highlands College and University Campus may require additional funding to provide a modern training provider.

11.10 Recommendation 1:

The Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel, established after the 2014 elections, should undertake a review into the funding, campus and course provision at Highlands College.

⁸ Hearing with ESC Minister 9th June 2014 Page 20

⁹ Hearing with ESC Minister 9th June 2014 Page 26

12. MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE ISLAND

- 12.1 The people of the Island regularly hear about a 'skills gap'. This is where various industries need skilled staff to perform specific functions and find that the skills are not available in the Island. This may in some cases be some particularly specialised skill, such as, perhaps a steeplejack for instance, but far more regularly, it is more usual skills that are wanted, the skilled staff within the Care Industry, the Hospitality Industry, even carpenters and other tradesmen are, at times, in short supply. This encourages inward immigration to Jersey and disadvantages the youth of the island by closing the door on training opportunities.
- 12.2 The Trackers Programme was a direct response to this problem. The Department of Education Sport and Culture created the Trackers Programme to meet the needs of industry in Jersey and to ensure that, where possible, local people were being trained to meet those needs.
- 12.3 For example, the Health Industry made an approach to Trackers because the regulations within the industry are changing and members of staff who are currently employed require a programme of training to obtain qualifications to do the jobs they have been doing for some time. The Care Programme, within the Trackers Programme was one initiative to advance the Trackers Programme further to meet that need.
- 12.4 The Panel understands that the department are attempting to provide a similar scheme for the Hospitality Industry.¹⁰
- 12.5 Industries cannot rely purely on young or inexperienced talent in their industry and will always want more experienced people as well. The Department meets and communicates with various elements of industry in Jersey to understand the needs of the future and to provide a trained workforce that is best prepared to meet those needs.

¹⁰ Hearing with ESC Minister 9th June 2014 Page 26.

- 12.6 The scheme is considered to be in the early stages but 100% of the students finished the first year of their studies and achieved the academic qualification expected of them for that year¹¹.
- 12.7 The students' results and feedback from both apprentices and employers has been positive. The Panel considers that the evidence of these results suggest that the Trackers Programme is providing what it was intended to provide.
- 12.8 The Trackers Team also keep in contact regularly with careers teachers and head teachers. Direct contact with 14 to 16 year old students has been through attending assemblies in schools, along with other initiatives designed to bring the Trackers Programme into the path of the age group it is aimed at.¹²
- 12.9 The Panel is satisfied that this programme is meeting the needs of the Island by connecting keen and available apprentices with the various industries looking for staff to train to undertake skilled work. By working together, the apprentices will provide the Island with the quality workforce needed to meet the demands of the future.

¹¹ Hearing with ESC Minister 9th June 2014 Page 3.

¹² Hearing with ESC Minister 9th June 2014 Page 25.

13. FUNDING

- 13.1 Initial funding for the Trackers Programme was agreed in the States within the MTFP 2013 – 2015, which provided £380,000 to take the scheme through to 2015.¹³ The programme was designed to host 120 students over a three year period.
- 13.2 There are currently 126 candidates within the programme. That is six more than originally budgeted for, with a further 94 students being interviewed for next year. The current budget is expected to cope with that excess.
- 13.3 The success of this programme encourages more students to enter the scheme. Clearly the numbers are significantly in excess of those expected and budgeted for in the initial MTFP bid. Although the request for additional funding to expand the scheme will be included in the next MTFP, the Panel is concerned that this scheme will become the victim of its own success. The Panel considers that the key to the programme meeting expectations appears to rest in the number and quality of mentors available. Any excessive pressure on those individuals will water down the product provided by ESC and negate the great work done to date.
- 13.4 The scheme has room and demand to expand and must be supported by sufficient funding to provide the resources necessary to maintain the standards that set the programme apart. It is clear that sufficient funding will ensure opportunities for local young people to enter the workplace and to train in apprenticeship skills. Training local people to deal with local needs in the workplace is an essential requirement of maintaining a strong, environmentally sustainable and diverse economy. And that is a fundamental priority within the Strategic Plan 2009-2014.¹⁴

¹³ Item 15, Page 72 MTFP2013-2015.

¹⁴ Priority 2 Strategic Plan 2009-2014.

14. CONCLUSION

- 14.1 There is much publicity about schemes that assist disadvantaged youth, unemployed people and others in unfortunate circumstances. That is as it should be. However, it is also right and proper that work should be done to assist those who are hardworking, productive members of society who are keen to get on, who have drive and flair and who will become the backbone of society in years to come. This Panel applauds the work being done within the Trackers Programme to assist people with those qualities.
- 14.2 Society in general will benefit from this programme because local people will be filling local jobs. Local people will be going on to be the skilled workforce and taxpayers of tomorrow.
- 14.3 The system of mentors creates security of attendance from the apprentices, understanding of the training and learning needs on the part of the employer and flexibility within the system to allow changes of direction where appropriate.
- 14.4 The £380,000 secured through to 2015 in the last Medium Term Financial Plan will be under severe pressure. The Minister is having a Business Plan drafted for a growth bid. In view of that, decisions need to be made.
- 14.5 The Minister might chose to:
- a) Provide extra funding to make the Trackers Apprentice Programme available to as many as meet the criteria; or,
 - b) Restrict the funding and therefore decide on the amount of apprentices to be accepted; or,
 - c) Allow numbers to increase but reduce the standard of mentoring per apprentice.
- 14.6 The scheme provides for young people who are keen to get on, interested in working and who are prepared to take advantage of the scheme. Should the Minister chose to obtain extra funding for the programme within the next Medium Term Financial Plan, the Panel advocates that States Members offer as much support as possible to this great scheme.

14.7 Key Finding 3:

The Trackers Apprenticeship Programme is in danger of becoming a victim of its own success by outrunning the budget previously made available. This would be to the detriment of the apprentices, local industry and the Island in general.

14.8 Recommendation 2:

The Minister for Education, Sport and Culture must request further funding for the Trackers Apprenticeship Programme within the next Medium Term Financial Plan.