

LLN Research Database by sussexlearningnetwork

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Title: Graduate Retention Study in Coastal West Sussex

Keywords: graduate retention; west sussex

Organisation: Sussex Learning Network

Purpose: The project investigated what factors influence graduate retention and employability within the West Sussex Coastal AIF. Its aim is to develop an understanding of the employment/labour market sectors and investigate the reasons and influences behind why graduates (including potential graduates) choose to study, live and work within or outside West Sussex Coastal AIF.

Method: The study focused on three key sectors in the Coastal West Sussex economy identified by the project steering group:

- Tourism, travel & hospitality
- Creative industries
- Business & financial services

An exploratory approach was taken, with the research designed to develop an understanding of the issues from a variety of perspectives, drawing on desk research and fieldwork with small groups of students, graduate employees, employers and course tutors/ careers advisors .

Outcomes of research: This study found mixed evidence regarding the current strength of the relationship between employer demand for graduate skills and the local supply of graduates in the Coastal West Sussex area. While elements of the relationship appear to be working well, a number of barriers to its effectiveness can be identified, including:

- The size and scale of demand for graduate skills in key sectors in Coastal West Sussex
- The independence of future students' decision-making process from local demand for skills
- Underdeveloped links between local employers and local Higher Education students
- Lack of information on potential job opportunities and potential employees in Coastal West Sussex

The results of the study suggest that the following activities could help to overcome some of these barriers:

1. Increasing the number of relevant graduate opportunities available locally

For example through using relationships between Higher Education and employers to help businesses to grow, promoting Coastal West Sussex as a location for businesses and start-ups in key sectors or capitalising on the selfemployment aspirations of students and graduates.

2. Encouraging and developing contact between students and industry

For example, by extending the "window of opportunity" for local graduate recruitment, encouraging employers to offer relevant part-time employment to students or using employers to deliver sessions on workplace skills.

3. Improving information exchange

Possible actions include introducing a registration system for employer and graduate interests, developing case study materials to improve understanding of students and employers or raising awareness of the quality of local opportunities.

Is a final report available?: Yes

How will the findings be disseminated?: Through the Sussex Learning Network website and the Lifelong Learning

Network National Forum

Where can it be found?: <http://www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk/sln-research/reports-andpublications>

Contact name: Peter Rainger

Email: pfr@brighton.ac.uk

Records: View Record

Access the SLN Research Database online at <http://www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk/research>