

Vocational pathways

Cornerstone Employer Case Study

Background

The Dorset area has a significant number of start-up businesses, with the creative and digital sectors particularly fast-growing industries. Local labour market information has shown a strong need for new talent to support this growth.

In line with this local skills agenda, the Dorset Careers Hub worked closely with Ferndown Upper School and Cornerstone Employer J.P. Morgan to develop and promote the first ever T Level course in Dorset, in IT Support and Digital. J.P. Morgan is a major local employer and already supports local skills and education programmes, such as apprenticeships, in line with their business strategy. Becoming involved in a new T Level was a natural next step.

Aims

Provide stakeholders with confidence about T-Levels as an entirely new qualification. Provide a positive example of how the increased requirements for work experience placements can be met by a supportive employer such as J.P. Morgan.



This pilot has shown how T levels can create stronger links with local businesses in Dorset as well as providing opportunities for students to develop their skills for the growing digital economy.

Rebecca Phillips

Strategic Lead, Dorset Careers Hub

Actions

- The Careers Hub brought all stakeholders together, including the local council, the school and J.P. Morgan. The Careers Hub also supported the launch of the course and promoted the T Levels available at Ferndown Upper School through its social media channels.
- Through Cornerstone Group meetings, consisting of 10 employers including J.P. Morgan, the local Careers Hub raised awareness of and interest in T Levels amongst a wider group of employers who were previously unaware of new post-16 options.
- The group discussed different approaches to supporting T Levels and were able to share knowledge about how to successfully engage with the new T Level qualification.
- The new course will launch in September 2022 and it is hoped that it will improve the outcomes of a cohort of young people with a preference for a vocational route, whilst also working long-term to plug skills gaps in the local economy.

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Outcomes

Early Wins:

- In bringing together different groups and stakeholders we have contributed to BM1, BM2, BM6 and BM7, highlighting the need for schools to be given the option to share new courses with other institutions, in line with the Provider Access Statement.
- Enhanced employer collaboration which will improve the outcome of a cohort of young people, with a preference for a vocational route, whilst working long-term towards plugging skills gaps in our local economy.

Emerging:

- Other Cornerstone Employers in the group are looking at how they can support T Levels including with digital work experience if legislation limits the age of placements.
- Involvement in a new local steering group and Pan Dorset T Levels group to continue to support local schools and employers in sharing knowledge and experience about T Levels as they develop.

Learnings

Open discussions were crucial to ensure everyone was fully up to date with developments, and to feel opinions and feedback were valued.

It was valuable to have perspectives of both large organisations and SMEs, especially in relation to the quality of delivery and to have a safe space to discuss sensitive issues such as payments for placements.

Next Steps

- Continue to raise awareness so that T levels are accepted and welcomed by all stakeholders.
- Look to support more schools and sectors to scale up and roll out more T levels.
- Poll businesses to understand their thoughts regarding whether placements should be paid or not.
- Produce a set of T Levels guidelines for Dorset businesses.

Relates to Careers Hub Coordinated Actions

			
Amplifying technical and vocational routes	Effective transitions	Careers education as part of economic recovery	Employers build long term sustainable, mutually beneficial partnerships with schools and colleges

Relates to Gatsby Benchmarks

2 Learning from career and labour market information.	3 Addressing the needs of each pupil.	4 Linking curriculum learning to careers.
5 Encounters with employers and employees.	6 Experiences of workplaces.	

How did the work align with the Cornerstone Employer role?

		
Helped to promote the hubs and the role of careers and education	Helped to embed careers education in the Cornerstone Employers' organisations	Helped to achieve better outcomes for young people