



Skills in London: Preparing for 2012

Report of an Open Agenda Event at St. George's House, Windsor Castle, 2nd – 3rd February 2006

This event was held to support the newly established London 2012 Employment & Skills Taskforce. Our focus was to explore how to establish a cross-organisational approach to drive forward the work needed to secure employment and maximise skills development from opportunities arising from hosting and the legacy of the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games

This report begins with a brief outline of four goals we felt that the Games and their legacy need to achieve in order for them to be measured a success. (page 2).

It continues by outlining the key characteristics we felt should govern the way in which multi-agency teams should work (pages 2 - 3). We advocated the use of these characteristics to define the way in which **all** cross-organisational teams should work – not just those working to create a successful 2012 Games and their legacy. What is different is that these groups will be very much under the spotlight of communities, employers and the media. Expectations of these groups will be high, and we saw this as an exciting opportunity to create new benchmarks of excellence.

We end the report with a brief description of six priority areas of work it was felt need to be tackled in the next 12 months, as preparation to the London Games. These comprise:

- Articulating aspirations and targets (page 4)
- Linking the 2012 Games to national and regional employment & skills programmes (page 4)
- Identifying early wins leading to the staging post of the 2012 Games (page 5)
- Putting together a route map and internal communication strategy (pages 5 - 6)
- Understanding how we can work most effectively with employers to maximise their competitiveness and success (pages 6 – 7)
- Building recruitment and training supply (page 7)

As with all Open Agenda reports, we aim to reflect the ideas and action points put forward in the event, with the understanding that not everybody involved the discussions endorsed all of the ideas included. Nor should they be viewed as a policy statement on behalf of the London 2012 Employment & Skills Taskforce, Greater London Authority, the Learning & Skills Council, London Development Agency or anyone else! Phrases that are italicised are direct quotes from the event, and a list of participants is included at the end of the report.

Krysia & Jo Hudek
Open Agenda, 21st February 2006

Our 4 Measures of Success

Our starting point was to define what we felt will be the important benefits of the Games to Londoners. In addition to successfully staging and competing in the Games, an additional four measures were advocated "*against which we should evaluate the success of the 2012 Games.*"

- **Reducing worklessness** amongst London residents. Under the umbrella term of workless adults, we included a number of different groups including people on incapacity benefit and parents looking for paid employment. We felt strongly that the employment opportunities should be of "*good quality, and not temporary, unskilled work.*"
- **Increasing productivity** amongst businesses by ensuring that they are able to take advantage of business opportunities arising directly and indirectly from the Games.
- **Improving diversity in the workforce**, and
- **Raising the career aspirations of young people.**

It was convincingly argued that the bid to host the 2012 Games was "*in part successful because of London's diversity*" and rich mix of communities, and because of its emphasis on the importance of raising aspirations amongst children and young people. These four goals will help measure our success.

Our characteristics for team working: *trust, energy and risk-taking by doing things differently*

At the core of successful cross-organisational team working we felt that there needs to be three driving characteristics: "*trust, energy and risk-taking by doing things differently.*" Our intent was to try our best to ensure that "*these characteristics are embedded in the way that we work together – strategically and operationally*" in maximising employment and skills development opportunities created by the Games.

These characteristics will be demonstrated by how members of cross-organisational groups behave with one another, and how the groups behave collectively. 'Behavioural traits' will provide a litmus test of the degree of trust, energy and commitment to working differently that exists within a group.

We identified 10 behavioural traits that we felt demonstrate trust, energy and doing things differently in cross-organisational teams.

1. "**Buy-in to a shared mission and objectives**" We recognised that signing up to a shared mission and objectives needs to be "*more than an aspiration of intent.*" It needs to include "*an understanding of partners' targets*", what each organisation can contribute to shared objectives, and "*how they may need to work differently in order to so.*"
2. "**Division of labour and leadership**" We felt this is as much about "*having permission to do nothing*" because a piece of research or a task "*is already being covered by an organisation or group*", as agreeing specific roles and responsibilities within different partnerships, so that everyone is comfortable with "*how their share of the cake contributes to the whole.*" Underpinning all is the

need for "*first class formal and informal communication systems*" and "*a real sense of trust amongst partners.*"

3. "**Collective responsibility**" When success is achieved it should be celebrated as the success of a partnership and not just that of one or more its members. Conversely, it was felt strongly that when difficulties are encountered, the "*internal and external line must be that it is the responsibility of the partnership, not of individual members.*"
4. "**Prioritise and corral**" It was felt that one of the key responsibilities of a partnership is to agree shared priorities and "*to corral*" the targets and activities of the organisations involved. If the partnership is to be successful, it has to feel confident that it can work differently in the way that it "*joins up the work of its partner organisations.*"
5. "**Authority to take action**" All members of the partnership need to be able to have authority to act on behalf of their organisations if "*the partnership is to have energy and be more than a talking shop.*" It was argued that members of a partnership need to understand the parameters of each other's authority in order for a partnership to be able to move forward in doing things differently, rather than "*constantly returning to our organisations for agreement before any decisions can be made.*"
6. "**Accountability and measures of success**" At the outset, it was felt that "*a partnership must agree and articulate the measures of success it will use to evaluate its achievement*". This should include establishing its lines of accountability within the partnership, its member organisations and, of course, wider stakeholders.
7. "**Transparency**" We recognised that transparency is *enormously important to gain the confidence of stakeholders, especially when expectations are running high*". In the build up to 2012 Games, expectations around job and training opportunities and business opportunities are going to be very high indeed. From the start, partnerships need to consider how they can best work openly to manage these expectations and minimise the risk disappointment amongst residents and local businesses.
8. "**Integrity and commercial acumen**" There was a strong view that all partnerships developed to maximise employment and skills opportunities generated through the 2012 Games need to be realistic about how much they can expect from employers. There needs to be "*commercial realism about what employers will be prepared to do in taking on local labour*" and training their workforces.

This doesn't mean that public and voluntary sector organisations need to shy away from putting forward a strong case for training and employing local residents. It will mean that that Government Departments, Agencies and organisations need to consider how they can best support employers in achieving this – "*not by promoting their own brand programmes,*" but by tailoring support so that it is fit for purpose.

9. "**Celebration**" Celebration of agreed milestones is important for any partnership to keep the energy flowing! Over a six year time span it will be vital "*for momentum and morale.*" We felt that the work

of the London 2012 Employment & Skills Taskforce should be marked by "*some early wins*" which chart, publicise and celebrate its progress and achievements.

10. "**Succession planning**" This element of partnership working is often overlooked. Partnerships need to recognise when they have achieved their aim and it is time to pass on the baton to a successor body. When the London Employment and Skills Taskforce has achieved its objectives, it will pass on the responsibility for taking forward this area of work to the London Skills Commission.

However, this is only part of the story! Partnerships comprise of individual members who may well move on during the lifespan of the partnership. This can adversely affect the health of a partnership if there is a significant turnover of its members or new members do not feel confident about their role and responsibilities within the partnership. It was suggested that one way to avoid this from happening would be to put into place an induction process that includes not only the objectives of the partnership and progress to date, but also "*the characteristics of how the partnership is committed to working*".

Priority areas of work to be tackled in the next 12 months

The following areas of work were identified as priorities for the London 2012 Employment & Skills Taskforce and the wider 'family' of organisations and associated groups over the next 12 months.

- i. **Articulating aspirations and targets** A priority action for Agencies and Departments with a remit for reducing worklessness and driving up skills in London will be to understand the "*drivers that govern the way*" in which each other's organisations work in order to achieve their targets.

This understanding "*is essential if Agencies are going to be creative in developing employment and training solutions*" to meet the needs of both workless residents and employers hoping to develop their businesses as a result of us winning the 2012 Games.

The goal of the partnership is "*to succeed where employment and training programmes in the past have failed.*" This will mean reviewing how programmes can be aligned, tweaked or redesigned to maximise their impact.

- ii. **Linking preparations for the 2012 Games to national and regional programmes** From the outset we felt that the 2012 Games should be used as a focus for national and regional programmes to help workless people and low-skilled employees, rather than regarded in any way as 'separate' to these programmes.

With the overall policy push towards making skills, learning and employability training more demand-led, we could see real scope in using the 2012 Games as a 'test-bed' for meeting employers and individuals needs.

As a priority, we felt that the London 2012 Employment & Skills Taskforce needs to identify how existing and new national and regional programmes (such as Train to Gain) can be shaped to form key planks in employment and training strategies for the 2012 Games.

- iii. **Identifying the early wins leading to the 2012 Games 'staging post'** We felt that it is important to view the 2012 Games as a staging post in regard to employment and training activities. Albeit an important staging post – but by no means the finale. The real prize will be the 2012 Games contribution and legacy to the regeneration of communities in London.

In the next 12 months, the following milestones or early wins were suggested.

Timeline	Suggested activities	Achievements
February 2006	London 2012 Employment & Skills Taskforce launched A communication strategy agreed	Profile and publicity
June	Procurement strategies and arrangements agreed	Clear and realisable expectations with regard to wages, diversity in the workforce and the use of local labour
July	London 2012 Employment & Skills Taskforce's Business Plan agreed	Shared employment intelligence Pooled budgets Targets agreed
July	A party for the youth of London Launch of a timeclock	Publicity
December	Pre-volunteer programme launched Initiatives for young people who are not taking part in education, employment or training Local role models, including people drawn from minority communities and people with disabilities	Graduates into training, voluntary work and jobs Local publicity and recognition

During our discussions, these early wins were suggested very much as a starting point. The expectation is that more will be identified and added to the timeline over the coming months.

- iv. **Putting together a route map and an internal communication strategy so there is wide understanding about who is doing what** We were conscious that even now, six years away, there is already an enormous amount of preparation for the 2012 Games taking place. With all this activity comes *"the danger of duplication, lost opportunities and a lack of connection."*

This is why we attached a great deal of importance to establishing an internal communication plan to ensure that everyone 'in the 2012 family' can keep up to date on developments. It will be especially important to ensure that there are good communication channels established between the London Employment & Skills Taskforce and the wider group or family of agencies and organisations with remits that include the funding, planning and delivery of employment placement and skills development. It was suggested that, in the first instance, the following elements should provide the core of the communications strategy.

A '**spider-gram**' showing which groups and individuals are doing what. We recognised that this will be a quick snapshot and likely to change and favoured that the spider-gram is reviewed and updated every couple of months as preparations get underway and new developments come on board.

A **timeline** showing London 2012 Employment and Skills Taskforce milestones (an internal timeline) together with milestones of other 'strands' of preparation for the Games. As with the spider-gram, it is envisaged that the timeline will be regularly updated.

Information about changes and developments will all be channelled through the Taskforce Secretariat.

- v. **Understanding how we can work most effectively with employers to maximise their competitiveness and success** Close communication needs to be established between the Taskforce and the London Business Board which will publish in late Spring "*a plan of what businesses can contribute to the preparation and hosting of the Games*" and the support they will seek to do so.

We felt that there are number of different strands of work that need to be tackled over the next 12 months to ensure that we can maximise the support we offer businesses to encourage local recruitment and training of their employees. These include:

- Exploring how the '**pyramid concept**' of clustering employment and training opportunities with employers around a major contract could be applied. The idea will be to explore the concept with a company that has recently secured a major contract related to the Games, as well as draw on examples of what has been achieved through this approach elsewhere.
- Making sure "*our own houses are in order*" by, for example, reviewing and seeking to increase the number of Apprentices employed by public sector Agencies and Government Departments
- Understanding the barriers standing in the way of different groups of workless groups moving into employment so that we can feel confident that – given the right support and skills training – local people will match employment opportunities.

We also felt that we needed to ensure that the importance of local recruitment and the training of employees should be given a high profile within the procurement requirements and processes being drawn up for companies wishing to tender for contracts related to the 2012 Games. It should be stressed that we recognised that the procurement process will **not be** the only lever for creating employment and training opportunities (indeed, the jobs created and training delivered in London could be relatively low).

Nevertheless, we did feel that it is important that employment and training requirements are highlighted because of the **high public profile** of these contracts. It is about the messages we will be sending out to local residents and other employers.

It was felt that **a balance needs to be struck** in how prescriptive or 'hard line' we should be about the employment and training opportunities we expect employers to create. On the one hand, we want employers themselves to create what we called "*a quality club*" – setting employment and training standards not only as a benchmark for themselves but for all employers for whom the Games will create extra business. On the other hand, we want to ensure that there are safeguards in place to ensure that, as a minimum, employers do use local labour where commercially viable, and do invest in training their employees.

- vi. Building recruitment and training supply** It was pointed out that recruitment and training for employment that will be in demand for the 2012 Games has already begun: "*11 people are already in jobs!*" This demonstrates a number of positive indicators that we already moving in the right direction.

The 2012 Games are providing a focus for inspiring workless and young people to move into training and employment. Jobcentre Plus have "*3 training buses and 30 staff ready to help local unemployed people*" understand the "*direct and indirect employment opportunities that preparing and hosting the Games is likely to create.*"

This is not to imply that we feel that the training and employment infrastructure of support is, as yet, fully fit for purpose or in place. Over the next 12 months, the priority will be to draw Agencies and organisations together to produce "*one well-articulated plan identifying roles, responsibilities, supply of provision and targets.*" This will involve identifying how well provision matches employers and individuals' needs, where it needs "*to be flexed or tailored*" and any gaps that need to be plugged.

End Note

During this event we felt we'd made real progress in establishing a strong cross-organisational team with the London 2012 Employment & Skills Task Force at its heart. The idea of the Taskforce at its heart is a good analogy because, surrounding the heart is the body of organisations drawn from the public, voluntary and private sectors which need to work **together** to achieve the goals we want from the 2012 Games and its legacy.

What we felt is important is not just the tasks this body needs to tackle over the next six years, but the way in which it works. At this event we identified the characteristics and behavioural traits that will demonstrate the health of the body. We left St. George's House committed to working over the next 12 months or so in a way that exemplifies these characteristics and confident about how we should set about maximising the opportunities that the 2012 Games can yield.

Participants

Jeremy Long	Chair, London 2012 Employment & Skills Taskforce & Chief Executive Officer – European Business, MTR Corporation
Ken Coello	Chair, Learning & Skills Council London East & London Skills Commission; Managing Director Lifeline Network Projects
Peter Lewis	Business Manager, Olympics, Sport and Regeneration, The Mayor's Office, Greater London Authority
Khamani Eze	Business Manager, Major Projects & Service Delivery, The Mayor's Office, Greater London Authority
Declan Gaffney	Policy Advisor (Social Inclusion), Mayor's Office, Greater London Authority
David Hughes	Regional Director, Learning & Skills Council London Region
Mary Conneely	Regional Director Regeneration, Learning & Skills Council London Region
Vivien Cutler	Executive Director, Learning & Skills Council, London East
Jim Lewis	Thames Gateway Skills Director, Learning & Skills Council
Marc Stephens	Executive Director, Olympic Opportunities & International Promotion, London Development Agency
Maxine Jones	Director of Skills & Employment, London Development Agency
Nadine Collins	Skills & Employment Manager, London Development Agency
Paula Hirst	Sustainability Adviser, Interim Olympic Delivery Authority
Clive Young	Assistant Director, Skills & People Policy, Construction Sector Unit, Dept. of Trade & Industry
Patrick Taylor-Martin	Team Leader, Regions & Skills, Dept. for Education & Skills
Paul Head	Principal, College of North East London
Robin Shreeve	Principal & Chief Executive, City of Westminster College
Sue Gidman	Chair, Work Based Learning Alliance, Central London
Dianna Neal	Head of Renewal & Culture, Association of London Government
John Attree	Director, Skills & Education, London First
Dinah Caine	Chief Executive, Skillset
Stephen Studd	Chief Executive, Skills Active
Peter Lobban	Chief Executive, CITB-Construction Skills
Trevor Dorling	Head of Economic Development, Greenwich Council
Sandra Lambert	District Manager, City & East London, Jobcentre Plus
Mike Barbier	Assistant Director, Labour Markets Team, Small Business Service
Robert Irvine	Acting Head of Division, Ethnic Minority Employment Division, Dept. for Work & Pensions
Mick Connolly	Regional Secretary, SERTUC & Board Member, London Development Agency
Kieron Gavan	Director of Employment Engagement, Sector Skills Development Agency
Elizabeth Balgobin	Chief Executive, London Voluntary Service Council
Richard Holt	Director of Futures Research, Experian Business Strategies
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