

Environment and Economy Committee – 12 12 24 - Skills Review

Chantel Lommel, Head of Service – Step 2 Skills.

- 1) Please give an overview of the role of Step2Skills in overcoming barriers to employment.
- 2) Who is a typical client for Step2Skills services, or is there a typical client?
- 3) The Step2Skills website and literature highlights the organizations courses, and partners courses. Clearly employability, maths and digital skills are a key part of your offer. However, there is also an emphasis on client's welfare and wellbeing. Please expand on the challenges that your clients can face, when considering entering, or re-entering the work, and what support is available.
- 4) Step2Skills offer short courses on creative activities. Please comment on the value of these activities in tackling poor mental health and increasing self-esteem, which appears to sit with a more holistic approach to tackling social exclusion and client wellbeing.
- 5) How important is your partner working with employers across Hertfordshire. Please highlight how they work with you, and the success that has been achieved.
- 6) How do you record and evaluate Step2Skills impact in overcoming barriers to employment, and how do you celebrate the learning journeys that your clients work through?

Matt Partridge – CEO Stevenage Borough Council and Deputy Chair Board Member Step2Skills.

- 1) Please comment on your own involvement with Step2Skills, and what drew you to this role?
- 2) Why is Step2Skills work important to Stevenage, and can you comment on the challenges in the local employment market that Step2Skills strives to overcome.
- 3) How has the Bedwell Multiple projects made a difference to local residence?
- 4) Has SBC been directly involved in supporting Step2Skills clients through mock interviews, or offering work experience, or other practical support to assist them in to work?

Matt Partridge - CEO Stevenage Borough Council

The strategic role of SBC in delivering a devolved skills agenda, with local partners and in a changing national framework.

- 1) This committee has heard a lot of compelling evidence from local schools, North Herts College, Stevenage, Hertfordshire County Council (LEP), and others on the emerging skills agenda in and around Stevenage. There are

definable skills shortages in Life Sciences, Advanced Engineering, Health and Social Care (Herts LSIP). What is SBC doing to address this, and help support local employers, and open good career opportunities for local residence?

- 2) Stevenage Works has a good track record in supporting learning and employment opportunities in construction. With good reason to believe this will continue as regeneration gathers pace in Stevenage. What challenges are ahead for Stevenage Works, as it moves in to supporting skills attainment in health and social care.
- 3) Does Stevenage Works have a future role in developing “green “skills, which are acknowledged as being a major challenge in achieving net zero, in areas like retrofit, insulation, solar, and heat pumps. As major public construction projects are planned in Stevenage, does an opportunity exists to grow this skills base, however small.
- 4) The government White Paper: Getting Britain Working was introduced in Parliament last week. (26/11/24). The proposals outlined are the most significant change in a generation. There is an expressed aim to ensure that Skills for England encourages a devolved, localised approach to skills and employment support services. In the years ahead, how do we ensure this approach flourishes, delivering good and stable jobs, and growing our local economy?