

Notes
Children and Young People Action Group
Thursday 4 September 2025
15.00 – 16.30
Hybrid at Petroc, G108

Present

Kurt Hintz, Interim Principal and CEO, Petroc
Jody Le Bretonchel, Headteacher at Ilfracombe Junior School
Phil Harris, Devon Mental Health Alliance
Tony George, Partnership Manager DWP
Julie Yates, Head of Business Engagement
Paul Curtis, Youth Connector, NDVS
Alex Farmery, Executive Officer, Petroc
Hannah Jones, Research Fellow Exeter University
Sarah Sexon, Manager St Michaels Nursery
Keith Bennett, Headteacher at Marland School
Katie Potter, Senior Designer Dartington Service Design Lab
Tim Hobbs, CEO at Dartington Service Design Lab
Mike Matthews, Director at Lineal Software
Jaime Wilson, Head of Marketing Petroc

Apologies were received from Tracey Elliott and Mark Turnbull

- **Merger of Exeter and North Devon Colleges:** Kurt provided an overview of the ongoing merger consultation between Exeter and North Devon colleges, outlining the proposed structure, naming conventions, and leadership transition, with John Laramy set to become the new CEO and principal after the merger in January.
 - **Merger Overview and Rationale:** Kurt explained that the merger aims to create a more resilient and larger college group, maintaining place-based campuses in Exeter and North Devon, with the intention to grow the North Devon provision and better meet community and employer needs.
- **Work Placement and Apprenticeship Campaigns:** Julie Yates updated the group on the outcomes of the 100 in 100 apprenticeship campaign and introduced the new 2000 Futures work placement campaign, with participants discussing strategies, challenges, and feedback mechanisms for engaging students and employers.
 - **100 in 100 Apprenticeship Campaign Results:** Julie reported that out of 206 apprenticeship pledges, 158 have been recruited, with ongoing efforts to convert remaining pledges and analyse reasons for unfilled positions, such as business closures or mismatches.
 - **Employer Engagement and Vacancy Management:** The team continues to receive apprenticeship vacancy requests from employers, with efforts to match students, including outreach to past students and collaboration with job centre advisors to maximize placement opportunities.
 - **2000 Futures Work Placement Campaign:** The new campaign aims to secure work experience for 2000 students, encompassing T-level placements, industry talks, site visits, and group projects, with a focus on celebrating employer contributions and broadening student exposure to various sectors.
 - **Feedback and Data Collection:** Feedback is gathered from both students and employers through surveys and systems like Grofar, with plans to

enhance data collection on mental health impacts and to compare outcomes with existing datasets for continuous improvement.

- **Support for SEND and Diverse Needs:** Special attention is given to placements for students with SEND, ensuring appropriate support and matching, and recognizing the need for a range of opportunities across the spectrum of student needs and maturity.
- **Youth Voice and Shadow Board Initiatives:** Katie and Tim Hobbs discussed the development of a youth voice infrastructure, including a proposed shadow board facilitated by the KAILO project, to ensure young people's perspectives inform decision-making and drive systemic change in youth employment and support.
 - **Shadow Board Proposal:** The KAILO project team proposed establishing a shadow board of young people, particularly those facing barriers to employment, to run alongside the main group and feed their priorities and ideas into decision-making processes.
 - **Integration with Existing Youth Networks:** Paul outlined efforts to unify various youth networks in North Devon, aiming to create a single, coordinated forum that includes youth councils and ensures broad representation, with KAILO's shadow board aligning with these efforts.
 - **Ensuring Effective Youth Participation:** Participants emphasized the importance of creating inclusive environments for youth engagement, considering the needs of SEND students and those from rural areas, and avoiding tokenism by committing to actionable responses to youth input.
 - **Collaboration with Local Projects:** The group discussed linking with existing youth voice initiatives, such as the Speak Up project and special school sector groups, to avoid duplication and strengthen the overall youth voice infrastructure.
- **Adult Short Courses and Community Learning:** Jamie presented the success and expansion of free adult short courses at Petroc, highlighting increased participation, course variety, and the positive impact on learners and their families, with ongoing efforts to tailor offerings to community needs.
 - **Course Offerings and Participation:** Over 700 adults participated in short courses last year, with offerings expanding from 30 to 100 courses, covering areas such as construction, British Sign Language, and creative industries, and high satisfaction rates among learners.
 - **Marketing and Application Process:** The team invested in digital and traditional marketing, streamlined the application process using the Bookeo system, and promoted success stories to encourage participation and progression.
 - **Community and Employer Links:** Courses are being delivered in partnership with local schools and employers, with tailored offerings for parents and efforts to address gaps in areas like youth work and teaching assistant training.
 - **Impact on Families and Employment:** Short courses are designed to be accessible and relevant, with evidence suggesting that adult participation in learning positively influences their children's educational and career aspirations.
- **KAILO Project Roadmap and Systemic Change:** Tim Hobbs and Katie outlined the KAILO project's final year focus on embedding a youth employment roadmap, seeking champions and system leaders to sustain its impact, and aligning activities with evidence-based practices and local needs.
 - **Roadmap for Youth Employment:** The KAILO project identified key areas for supporting youth employment, including apprenticeships, work experience, and well-being, with a focus on meaningful, inclusive, and sustained engagement for young people.
 - **Ownership and Sustainability:** The project seeks to embed ownership of the roadmap within local institutions, such as North Devon College Group and

- DWP, to ensure continuity beyond the funded period, with embedded researchers from Exeter and UCL evaluating progress.
- **Alignment with Broader Initiatives:** Participants discussed the challenge of aligning KAILO's work with a 'blizzard' of concurrent government and local initiatives, emphasizing the need for focus and integration to avoid duplication and maximize impact.
 - **Support for Employers and Equity:** The roadmap includes support for employers to engage with youth employment initiatives and a strong emphasis on equity, targeting support for marginalized and neurodivergent young people.
 - **Challenges in Youth Work and Funding:** Participants discussed the decline in youth work funding, the need for coordinated youth services, and the difficulties in securing sustainable investment for youth hubs and support roles, especially in the context of broader funding cuts and local authority priorities.
 - **Decline in Qualified Youth Workers:** The group noted a shortage of qualified youth workers in Devon, with sector collapse following austerity and a slow recovery, highlighting the need for renewed training and career pathways.
 - **Funding and Resource Challenges:** Efforts to secure funding for youth hubs and support roles are hampered by fragmented and insufficient funding streams, with local authorities prioritizing statutory responsibilities and SEND improvement over broader youth work.
 - **Employer Engagement and Support Needs:** Participants raised the need for clearer support and guidance for employers involved in youth employment and work experience initiatives, seeking input on effective strategies and resources.
 - **Employer Training and Guidance:** Participants discussed the importance of providing employers with practical support, training, and resources to effectively host and mentor young people, recognizing that employers often lack clarity on their roles and responsibilities.

Follow-up tasks:

- **Apprenticeship Data Analysis:** Compile and review regional apprenticeship data by Christmas, including all providers and geographic breakdowns, to compare with last year's figures. (Julie Yates)
- **Work Experience Feedback Integration:** Coordinate with KAILO project team to align student work experience feedback surveys with mental health and social determinants data, and develop relevant survey questions for future data collection. (Julie/Katie)
- **Special School Work Experience Engagement:** Share contact details and arrange for senior staff from special schools to speak to apprentices and host placements, ensuring inclusion of students with appropriate maturity levels. (Keith Bennett)
- **Youth Network Consolidation:** Initiate the creation of a unified Northern Devon youth network by contacting heads of existing youth networks and establishing a collaborative space for sharing and advocacy. (Paul)
- **Youth Voice Shadow Board Formation:** Establish a shadow board facilitated by the KAILO team, composed of young people (especially those with poor employment outcomes), to run alongside the main group and feed priorities into meetings. (Katie, KAILO team)
- **Employer Support Resource Development:** Develop resources and guidance to better support small cultural and creative industry employers in hosting work experience placements, in collaboration with young people and relevant colleges. (Julie)
- **DWP Senior Manager Meeting:** Arrange an early meeting with senior Managers within DWP to discuss alignment and integration of current youth employment initiatives and funding streams. (Tony George)



- **Employer Support Strategy:** Define and propose a strategy for supporting employers in youth employment initiatives, including training and guidance, and present it to the group for feedback. (Katie)

The meeting concluded at 16.45

The next meeting is scheduled for the 13 November at 15.00.