

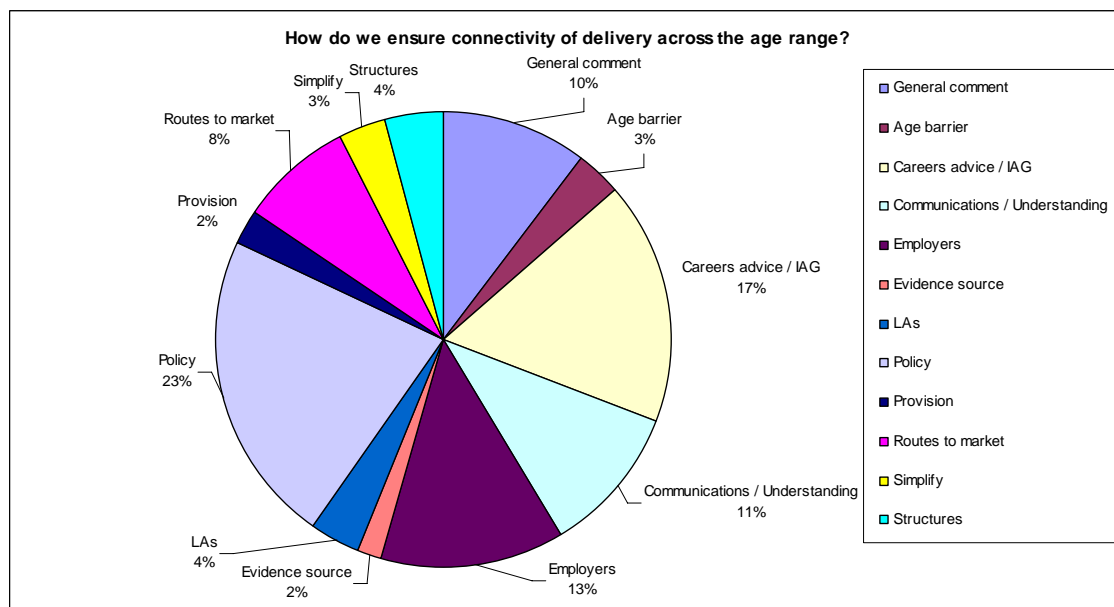
EESCP sub-regional workshops

Recently EESCP held a series of four workshop events across the region to communicate and consult with all key stakeholders on the evidence base needed for the forthcoming Skills Priorities Statement (SPS) being prepared by the Strategic Skills team at EEDA.

The events also discussed the Regional Skills Strategy but, due to the recent change of government, there is no longer a requirement to produce this. However, there is still a need to produce a Regional Skills Priorities Statement for 2011/12 and the Strategic Skills Team will continue to proceed with the development of this. Therefore there is still a requirement to consult with partners and stakeholders across the region, including the involvement of sub regional partnerships and we will continue with these activities.

The discussion sessions were centered on three questions. All comments and threads were recorded and have now been grouped into theme headings. A brief synopsis of the main themes arising from each question follows.

How do we ensure connectivity of delivery across the age range?



Matters, and differences, of policy both local and national was the most common theme discussed when contemplating the above question in the workshop sessions. It was widely acknowledged that the difference in the funding policies between 14-19 and 19+ was a major barrier to connectivity of delivery inasmuch as 14-19 funding was now decided from a local 'bottom-up' approach via local authorities with funding from one department and that 19+ funding was decided from a top-down national formula with funding from another department. It was a widely held view that until national policy changed it would be very difficult to reconcile the two very different types of funding. There was also acknowledgement that all agencies, training providers and employers really need to join up better to help shape skills delivery in areas.

"Problems with competing targets from two different departments – need to lobby to set up complimentary targets"

"Flexibility of funding needed to meet local priorities. Difficult within current complex system"

"Ensure contracts match priorities. Share intelligence of contracting – what is being delivered to join up working"

Analysis of the comments and discussions around the above question show that one major theme was centred on the importance of good careers advice and IAG that crossed the 14-

19 / 19+ barrier. The comments recorded also revealed the concern that young people should be given more and better information around future jobs needs and given help in raising their aspirations. There seemed to be a perception that the links between pre and post 19 careers services were not as robust as they could be – this may not be the case however and it could be that both agencies just need to highlight the ways they work together better.

“IAG and work experience offering needs to be strengthened to reflect future economic needs”

“Create better links between Connexions and nextstep and better careers advice”

“Need good mapping of skills across occupation and sectors and show career progression pathways and skills requirements, plan provision to meet these”

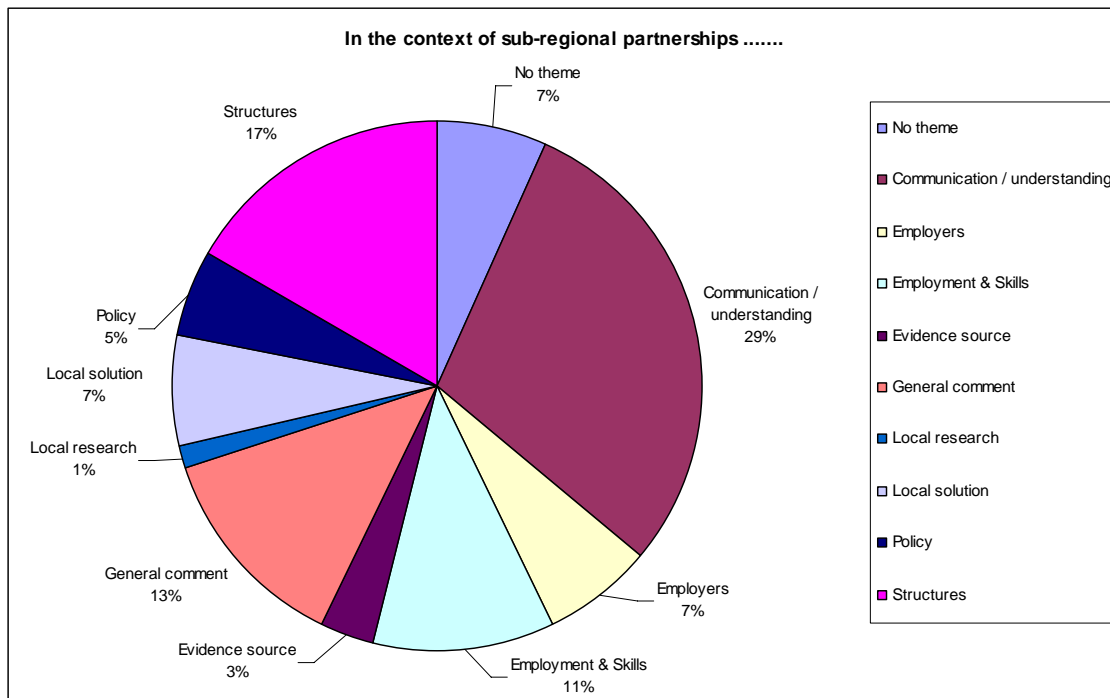
Engagement of employers was another major theme discussed within the headline question. There appeared to be a common feeling among the delegates that it was important that employers needed to be heavily involved in order to articulate skills needs and help agencies in highlighting career prospects in the sectors.

“Involve employers more with informing skills demands.”

“Refresh of curriculum to reflect employer needs.....”

“Capturing the needs, activities and competence of SME’s in identifying, responding and managing their skill needs and current skills.”

In the context of sub regional partnerships – how can sub regions engage to understand policy; to advise and implement both up and down in the skills system?



By far the largest proportion of comments and discussion recorded showed that there was a very great need for a better understanding of the whole skills landscape from a sub-regional point of view and a lot of confusion as to what groups were already operating in an area and clarification of how sub sub regional (i.e. district) plans could feed into development of the RSPS.

“What sub regional partnerships are we talking about? How do we know what partnerships exist – how useful are they? What are their remits?”

“What are they? How do they fit within LA boundaries?”

“Need clarity around regional infrastructure and how it works for adults”

“Use simpler, less jargonised language for learners, employees (i.e. non public sector) to understand skills agenda better”

‘Structures’ was the next main common theme that came out of the discussions under this headline question. Some suggestions advocated using already existing groups such as LSPs and other such groups to help sub regions implement and advise on skills policy whilst others nominated the Local Authorities but with the need for some internal changes to enable better communication. There were no suggestions for any new groups to be formed.

“LA’s but need to join up – sometimes ED person works on skills but doesn’t join up with Children’s Services representative”

“LAs may be hubs for finding and accessing the networks...”

“Districts & sub regional bodies through LSPs need to develop more formal links with each other”

“LSPs engaging with policy and system”

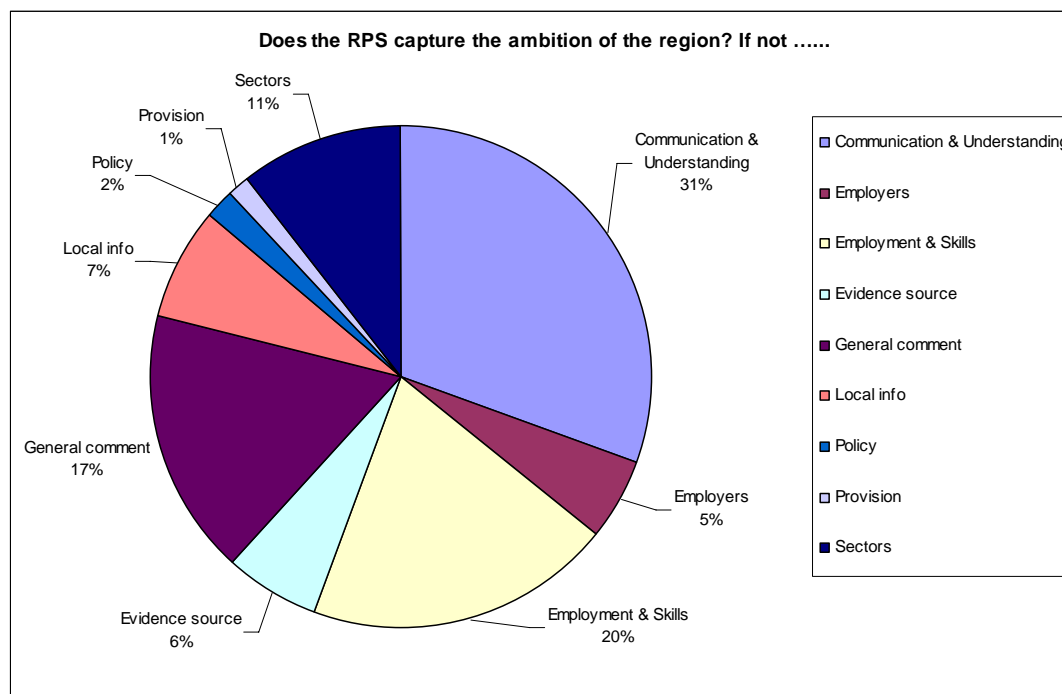
A number of comments could be grouped under the theme ‘Employment and Skills’ but there was no apparent major sub-theme that could be discerned. Examples are:

“HE role to deliver skills practical to work”

“The skills system itself does not make it easy to reflect and meet employer or individual needs (eg qualifications or sectors)”

“Opportunities to bring businesses into classrooms can help change perceptions of a sector”

Does the Regional Skills Priority Statement (RSPS) capture the ambition for the region and the scale of challenge? If not, what changes would you suggest and what evidence supports these changes?



From the feedback sessions after the discussions it was evident that the general feeling was that the current RSPS was broadly correct but it was too generic and did not stand out as being a document specifically about the East of England. It was acknowledged, though, that

given a week to write it and being constrained to two pages it was very difficult to produce anything other than a quite generic document. These comments have been taken on board and the next version, due the end of July 2010, should reflect more of a regional perspective to it.

The main theme that came out of this part of the discussion was 'communication / understanding'. Here there was a need for clarity on how the RSPS would be used and what the consultation routes were. These questions were answered by Amanda Montague in the wrap-up session.

"What action to be taken as a result of priorities, who will deliver?"

"Consultation routes to fully capture ambitions of the region?"

"RSPS needs to be more defined as to what is needed"

'Employment & Skills' was a theme that came through strongly from the delegates. Comments recorded show that delegates broadly were concerned that the RSPS contained strategies that included tackling those with low level, or no, qualifications and ensure that it also captures other sectors and not just the new future growth sectors.

"Bread and butter of the region – Health and social care – retail – high level skills – leisure & hospitality – hotel and catering"

"Needs to show more emphasis on soft skills and basis ICT and below level 2 provision"

"Not sufficient focus on lower level skills"

Next Steps

EESCP would like to thank all the delegates who attended the workshops for their input and assure them that all the recorded discussions and comments will be considered during the compilation of the SPS.

A copy of the first draft of the SPS can now be found [here](#) along with a short consultation form. Please note that this is still very much a work in progress and will be continually updated over the next few months but we feel that it is important for our partners and stakeholders to be able to see what the evidence base is already showing us and be given every opportunity to provide us with feedback even at this early stage.