



LEP – Sub Committee

LEP - Lancashire Skills and Employment Board

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Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub update

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Executive Summary

This paper provides an overview of the Lancashire Skills Hub activity since the last board meeting.

Recommendation

The Board are asked to note the update.

Background and Advice

1. Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

- 1.1 The expansion of the Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network is underway. Eight additional schools have been engaged in Blackpool and East Lancashire since the last board meeting, in addition to the existing 22 in Burnley and Blackburn with Darwen. Discussions are underway with schools across the roll out areas – Blackpool, Morecambe, Preston, Pendle, Rossendale and Hyndburn; with view to increasing engagement to sixty by the end of January.
- 1.2 A presentation was given at the LEP Board on Tuesday 8th November, with view to raising awareness and to encourage LEP Board members to urge businesses to get involved, either as Enterprise Advisers or in the delivery of activities linked to the employer engagement plans.
- 1.3 The Careers and Enterprise Company procurement exercise to contract mentoring providers across the Country has now been completed. This is complementary to the ESF activity recently tendered, and is welcomed as an earlier intervention to support young people to reengage pre-GCSE. The outcome of the procurement exercise will be announced at the end of



November, with a view to providers commencing early January. Initially activity will be focused on developing systems and processes and engaging businesses, with view to delivery commencing after Easter.

- 1.4 The Labour Market Information (LMI) fact sheets, developed in partnership with the National Careers Service, to bring the sector studies alive, are now available on the website: <http://www.lancashireskillshub.co.uk/about-us/evidence-base/> . The resources will be shared with teachers, tutors, careers professionals (both supporting adults and young people), parents and young people, to help young people and unemployed adults make informed choices about their future.
- 1.5 Two pilot workshops were run with Schools Governors covering Lancashire Labour Market Intelligence, the Apprenticeship Reforms and the Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network, in partnership with the National Careers Service and the Lancashire Work Based Learning Executive Forum (promoting 'Amazing Apprenticeships'). The intention was to raise awareness of reforms, and help Governors to drive the statutory requirement for schools to provide impartial careers information, advice and guidance. In total 25 Governors registered to attend the workshops; 4 of those that registered cancelled last minute but wanted further information and 1 did not attend. Of the 20 that did attend, 16 completed evaluations and 15 said that the workshops were useful or very useful. There was interest in all of the topics, and a number were interested in follow-on activities in their schools. Further workshops targeting School Governors will be planned early in the New Year.
- 1.6 In early October, the Government announced £60 million funding targeting 10 opportunity areas, aimed at helping local children get the best start in life. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/social-mobility-package-unveiled-by-education-secretary>. Blackpool was included in the first 6 opportunity areas announced. It is envisaged that opportunity areas will see local partnerships formed with early years providers, schools, colleges, universities, businesses, charities and local authorities to ensure all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential. It is indicated that opportunity areas will also be given prioritised access to a wider support package helping young people from nursery right through to starting work, including a teaching and leadership innovation fund worth £75 million over 3 years focused on supporting teachers and school leaders in challenging areas to develop.

It is understood that the Careers and Enterprise Company will be directing innovation funding to the opportunity areas, working with the Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network, to increase employer engagement and the number of encounters between business / industry and young people.

Further detail regarding the opportunity areas and the DoE announcement is awaited.



2. European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF)

- 2.1 The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) opt-in project for Access to Employment (engaging unemployed adults into work) has been awarded to the consortium of Lancashire colleges and work based learning providers; the accountable body is Preston's College (mirroring the NEET project, 'Moving On'). Preston's College will provide an update in regard to the Moving On project and also early plans for Access to Employment at the committee meeting.
- 2.2 A tripartite meeting has been held with Learndirect, who secured the Employee Skills Support SFA opt-in project, and the SFA. Interviews were undertaken for a Strategic Partnership Manager (Employers) (to be deployed to the hub); unfortunately an appointment was not made and a further search is underway for a suitable candidate.
- 2.3 The SFA has written to the ESIF Committee to request support to extend the 3 SFA opt-in contracts for 4 months to the end of July 2018 (rather than end of March 2018); this recognises the delays in procurement and contracting. There is no extra funding, the arrangement would simply extend the period for delivery of outputs and outcomes. This is viewed positively as the delivery period had been squeezed. In addition the SFA have asked to vary the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the SFA and the Lancashire LEP, to reduce the level of co-finance; the co-finance would then mirror what has been contracted to-date recognising the uncertainty of the position of the SFA beyond July 2018. This would free up the third currently allocated to the SFA opt-in (£13.67m) which has been highlighted in previous reports.
- 2.4 A meeting with DWP and G4S, the successful tenderer, is awaited for the DWP opt-in project; activity is due to start in January.
- 2.5 The call for stage 1 tenders relating to Active Inclusion closed on the 19th July. These projects require match locally. 7 applications were received; 6 are advancing to stage 2. Stage 2 applications will be reviewed in December.
- 2.6 The Autumn statement is awaited – it is hoped that there will be clarity regarding the remaining funding in the Lancashire LEP's ESIF programme. A verbal up-date will be provided at the committee meeting.

3. Growth Deal Skills Capital

The Technology Hub at Edge Hill University was launched on the 19th October, with stakeholder, partners and businesses. Investment from the LEP enabled an additional floor and investment in a 'CAVE' (automatic virtual environment). Graham Cowley, Chair of the Growth Deal Management Board, featured in the video at the opening, and positive PR was generated, for example: <https://bdaily.co.uk/technology/10-10-2016/edge-hill-to-unveil-3d-virtual-environment-facility-cave/>



4. Apprenticeships

- 4.1 A joint approach has been taken to raise awareness of apprenticeships and the apprenticeship levy with the Lancashire Work Based Learning Executive Forum and Lancashire Business View. Three events, targeting employers, took place over the month of October across Lancashire, one in East Lancashire, one in Central and one in the West of the County. At each event there was an expert input on the levy followed by a panel debate – Michele in the East and West, and Paul Holme at the Central event, alongside a provider representative and two businesses. The events collectively attracted 200 delegates from 145 businesses, and all involved lively debates. A common theme was that of seasonal and part-time workers and ability to use the levy to support apprenticeship training in these groups; a response was compiled and submitted into the technical consultation that closed earlier this month. An overview will be published in the LBV magazine, further publicising the levy and the support available locally.
- 4.2 A 'teach in' session, held by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) for LEPs, was attended; the session aimed to update and enable the LEPs to speak confidently about the reforms at events and with businesses. There is a clear expectation that the LEPs will run with the apprenticeship growth agenda and help to penetrate local areas, particularly now that the SFA has reduced in size. A LEP session was attended at the Birmingham Skills Show, which also aimed to gain LEP engagement and at which £5k of funding was announced per LEP to support events! There is a question about resourcing – at present apprenticeship growth is stitched into the ESIF SFA opt-in activity which will help to support activity, however post-July 2018 this will not be the case; this is an issue the committee will need to consider in the future. This issue was raised at the Skills Show, alongside the need to improve data sharing in regard to employers if the LEP is to truly act as a 'tag team' with the SFA.
- 4.3 A presentation was given, in collaboration with Forbes Solicitors, at the Lancashire CIPD Branch event on the 2nd November. The Skills Hub covered the Apprenticeship Reforms, including the Apprenticeship Levy and points to consider, and Forbes provided an input on the benefits and the legalities of employing apprentices, followed by a presentation from their 'star' Young Apprentice Ambassador, Frankie. A session was also held with the Blackpool Tourism Academy to discuss the Apprenticeship Reforms, and to also provide a general update on ESIF activity and the Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network; the issue of seasonal workers was raised in relation to the levy, and has been raised with the SFA.

5. Area Based Review

A significant amount of time has been dedicated to supporting the Lancashire Area Based Review, including chairing and facilitating the working group, undertaking meetings with the Deputy FE Commissioner and the college principals and chairs, and supporting the stakeholder engagement process. A detailed up-date will be provided under the main agenda item.