



## LEP – Sub Committee

## LEP - Lancashire Skills and Employment Board

**Private and Confidential: No**

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## Skills 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:

1. Note the up-date.
2. Support the suggestion that Graham Cowley be invited to a future meeting to talk about the work in Blackpool and the evolving approach to the Opportunity Area.

## Background and Advice

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

- 1.1 The expansion of the Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network with Inspira has exceeded the end of January target (60 schools and colleges). The network has grown from 30 to 62 schools since the update in November. The network is spread across Burnley and Blackburn with Darwen, and the new areas: Blackpool, Morecambe, Preston, Pendle, Rossendale and Hyndburn. Thirty six Enterprise Advisers have been recruited to date. 65% are SMEs and 35% are large employers. The focus in the new areas is the recruitment of the additional Enterprise Advisers; 25 of the 36 Enterprise Advisers are matched to schools with the remainder commencing during February and March. Employers from the Energy and Health and Social Care sectors are currently being approached



to complete engagement of Enterprise Advisers across all Lancashire LEP priority growth sectors.

- 1.2 Employer engagement strategies and plans are being embedded into the schools with support from their Enterprise Adviser and the Enterprise Coordinator. As a result a range of activities are being developed which are increasing the number of employer encounters. Examples from Blackburn with Darwen and Burnley include local Business Leaders providing Year 10 Business Studies students an insight into starting and running a business (7 employers supported this activity), visits to companies by groups of gifted and talented Year 9 students (6 companies engaged), whole year groups will be spending half a day in businesses in March 2017 (7 companies engaged), students from Coal Clough Academy (Pupil Referral Unit) spent time with Pendleside Hospice's Fundraising team to work as a team to plan and deliver a fundraising project, supporting the development of employability skills. A large skills event in Blackburn with Darwen is planned on the 7 March 2017 during National Careers Week which will be supported by 33 organisations and attended by 600 young people. The event will enable young people to have hands on experience of employer related activities.
- 1.3 The Careers and Enterprise Company procurement exercise to contract mentoring providers across the Country has now been completed. Two contracts for Lancashire have been awarded (of the 29 nationally): EBPNW in the East of Lancashire and Preston, and Inspira in Blackpool and Morecambe. This is complementary to the ESF activity recently tendered, and is welcomed as an earlier intervention to support young people to reengage. Project initiation meetings have been held jointly between the Careers and Enterprise Company and the Skills Hub.
- 1.4 The Inspira mentoring provision is targeting Years 8 to 10; schools are asked to identify the young people they feel will benefit most. In this first academic year (2016/17) Inspira is contracted to work with 84 young people and engage sufficient business mentors (the business mentors will support 3 young people in the Inspira model). In the second academic year this grows to 166 young people. Three Blackpool Schools have been engaged to-date and recruitment of mentors has commenced. A mentoring handbook has been developed, which will complement Inspira's mentoring training programme; the first training programme will take place early March, with view to activity commencing late March.
- 1.5 EBPNW will support 120 learners from cold spots along the M65 corridor through a 1:1 and group mentoring programme to Year 9 and 10 students at risk of disengaging. Students are targeted based on referrals from school. The face-to-face mentoring will occur on average every 3 to 4 weeks. Students will undertake 6 activities throughout the programme, including enterprise activities. Six of seven target schools have signed service level agreements and are in the process of identifying students. Mentor recruitment is



underway, with the first 12 employers now fully trained and DBS cleared ready for delivery to commence in schools at the beginning of March.

- 1.6 The activity fund has been released by the Careers and Enterprise Company for activity in academic year 2017/18. The funding supports the delivery of activities which can be embedded into the employer engagement plans of the schools and colleges involved in the Enterprise Adviser Network. A rate card approach is being trailed this year in the Opportunity Areas, including Blackpool, so that schools can pick from a menu of options with their Enterprise Adviser. The Skills Hub has been involved in the evaluation process; 20 proposals have been shortlisted and interviews will take place in March.
- 1.7 A forum organised by the Careers and Enterprise Company for LEP Skills Leads was attended on the 7<sup>th</sup> February. The Skills Hub was invited to present on progress in Lancashire and the strategic fit of activity and how it aligned with the priorities of the LEP. It was announced at the meeting by the company that the Department of Education has confirmed funding until the end of academic year 2019/20. It was indicated that a letter will be sent to the LEP confirming the grant offer in April. Match funding is in place until the end of 2017/18 in Lancashire via Lancashire County Council. Further match will be need to be confirmed to continue activity.

## **2. Blackpool Opportunity Area**

- 2.1 In early October, the Government announced £60 million funding for 10 opportunity areas (now 12), aimed at helping local children get the best start in life and improving social mobility. Blackpool was included in the first 6 opportunity areas announced. It is intended 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. The Careers and Enterprise Company have also offered to fully-fund an Enterprise Coordinator in each of the Opportunity Areas and the LEP has received a grant offer for Blackpool, which will complement the work to date and the broader Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network.
- 2.2 The Skills Hub is involved in the development of the approach in Blackpool and is working with Graham Cowley (who has agreed to chair the Executive Partnership that is being established to oversee the Opportunity Area delivery plan) Blackpool Council and the Blackpool School Improvement Board. The executive, which also includes Blackpool and The Fylde College, will feed in developments and good practice to the Skills and Employment Board to ensure that learning and good practice is disseminated to other areas of Lancashire in which there is a 'disadvantage gap'. Graham has offered to attend a future meeting of the committee to provide further insight.



### **3. European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF)**

- 3.1 The main agenda item relating to ESIF provides an update on the latest position in relation to procurement and planning.
- 3.2 Tracy Heyes, Strategic Partnerships Manager (Employers) commenced employment on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January. Interviews were held early January for the Strategic Partnership Manager (Adults). Sara Gaskell has been appointed and will commence employment on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> March; Sara has a strong track record in developing strategic partnerships and overseeing ESF adult-facing activity.
- 3.3 The three Skills Funding Agency (SFA) opt-in projects are now in delivery. In addition to the steering group for the NEET activity (SFA and Big Lottery), a steering group has been established for the Employee Skills Support project led by Learndirect (upskilling in the workplace) and met for the first time mid-January.
- 3.4 The SFA NEET programme is currently underperforming nationally due to the complex nature of the funding model and eligibility criteria (as presented at the November meeting by Preston's College). Preston's College have provided the following update (3.4.1 and 3.4.2).
  - 3.4.1 In December, Preston's College gained agreement to re-profile (as previously reported). The project has now formally been extended to July 2018, although the requirement to deliver the full amount originally profiled by July 2017 is still in place. At the February Performance Management Point (PMP), the value delivered by the partnership was £498,867. This equates to 861 starts on programme. A key challenge is the need to deliver a further £2,025,758 in this academic year to avoid contract reduction at the July PMP. There is a 10% tolerance against this value. Work has been undertaken to ensure that realistic profiles are in place with delivery partners and to streamline the evidence validation compliance process. A procurement exercise to select additional delivery partners to address any shortfall in value or gaps in provision focusing on target groups and geographic wards has been initiated; successful applicants will be announced publicly on Tuesday 28 February 2017.
  - 3.4.2 There may be a further opportunity to re-profile in April 2017 with the possibility that the current July restriction might be lifted. This would mean that the income profile could be spread more realistically across the academic years. Any requests would be agreed with the Skills and Employment Hub around emerging need and priorities, and would aim to achieve the greatest impact over the project lifetime. The next steering group takes place on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> February.
- 3.5 The SFA Employee Skills Support programme commenced delivery in January, following the development phase in the previous quarter. The next steering group takes place on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February. The following update has been provided by the accountable body, Learndirect (3.5.1 and 3.5.2).



- 3.5.1 The project comprises 3 strands: Skills Support for the Workforce (SSW) – basic skills, SSW – intermediate and higher level, and Skills Support for Redundancy (SSR). In January, 21 Learner Assessments and Plans were delivered against SSW - basics skills against a profile of 29. Reassuringly performance is forecast to be 311 against a profile of 88 in February. No Learning Assessments and Plans have yet been delivered against the other two strands, however activity is forecast in February of 25 against SSW – intermediate and higher level (against a profile of 136) and 54 (against a profile of 41) for SSR.
- 3.5.2 Delivery is being undertaken by both Learndirect and their supply chain. Learndirect have now formally contracted with 9 suppliers which are profiled to deliver from February. 3 suppliers delivered activity in January. Following the recent ITT to procure new suppliers due diligence is underway and Learndirect expect the newly contracted suppliers to be delivering by Mid-March (which will boost the level of delivery against SSW – intermediate and higher level). It is anticipated that delivery will increase in March with the increase in the supply chain and also further development of the Learndirect direct delivery curriculum.
- 3.6 The SFA Access to Employment is the final SFA opt-in project. The accountable body for the project is Preston's College. A steering group is to be established once Sara Gaskell takes up post, and also a broader forum which will bring in the range of projects which aim to support active inclusion and labour market mobility. Preston's College have provided the following update in relation to Access to Employment (3.6.1 and 3.6.2).
- 3.6.1 The 2 themes of the Access to Employment contract combine to a total contract value of £6.7m and aims to support over 4,000 unemployed and inactive adults across Lancashire into work. The contract is held by Preston's College as Lead Accountable Body on behalf of LESEP. The delivery network includes colleges, private training providers, third sector and other partner organisations. There are a number of new and different partners to the NEET partnership including specific employment and sector focused training providers. This addresses the high percentage of job and Apprentice outcomes required.
- 3.6.2 The majority of delivery partners have received letters of intent allowing them to start delivery while contracts are finalised and the first participants started on programme this month.
- 3.7 Three projects have been contracted under the Big Lottery 'Building Better Opportunities' opt-in with Social Enterprise Network Lancashire (Selnet) as the accountable body. The projects aim to target the most disadvantaged in Lancashire. The Invest in Youth (NEET) project is complementary to the SFA activity and is overseen by the same steering group. All three projects have now been contracted. The following update has been provided by Selnet (3.7.1 to 3.7.4).



- 3.7.1 The two projects, Invest in Youth and Age of Opportunity are under profile in terms of the targets for the period, however this is the case for all BBO projects in the North West and we are confident that we can increase through-flow to bring us to our target profile for this current period.
- 3.7.2 'Invest in Youth' targets young people aged 15-24. 112 participants are registered on the project CRM system and the first grant claim was submitted in January. The key project partners continue to meet on a monthly basis to share learning and support each other to help our participants. There is an emerging demand for mental health/wellbeing support for participants on this project and we are currently examining ways of meeting this demand using the flexible specialist budget which we have built into the project, without duplicating existing external provision. Two partners have withdrawn from the programme and we are now procuring replacement delivery partners to fill the gap in provision.
- 3.7.3 'Age of Opportunity' targets disadvantaged unemployed adults aged 50 and over. The project is now supporting participants and is currently experiencing a higher than anticipated interest. There are 232 participants registered on the project CRM system. The first grant claim was submitted in January and the feedback from the subsequent audit was positive. There has been significant demand within this project for support with speaking English. We are currently making plans to map external language services to enable us to see where there are gaps in provision. Where it is justifiable we will look to procure support for participants using the flexible specialist budget we have built into the project. Five partners have withdrawn from the project since it started in August 2016 and we are now procuring replacement delivery partners to fill the gap in provision.
- 3.7.4 'Changing Futures' was approved by BLF on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017 and partners are currently recruiting new posts in order to deliver the project. The first referrals onto the project have been made by partners who are ready to deliver, though most delivery will begin in April.
- 3.8 Sean McGrath and the Skills Hub attended a project initiation meeting with DWP and G4S, who are the accountable body for the 3 year DWP opt-in keyworker project. The delivery partners are Burnley Football Club in the Community, Bootstrap, Blackpool Council and PHX Training. The project aims to give benefit claimants additional support to secure work. A second meeting was also held to discuss referral processes to the project, and also the skills escalator and referrals to the Employee Skills Support project, to maximise sustainable job outcomes. A critical issue at present is the length of time it takes for DWP to confirm that a customer is eligible (up to 20 days) – DWP are looking at how this can be reduced, as this impacts on attrition.



- 3.9 Stage 2 applications to the Active Inclusion call were appraised against strategic fit at the ESIF committee in January. DWP are now appraising bids (which includes the new requirement to appraise projects against 'national value for money') and liaising with Treasury. It is currently unknown how long the process will take and when projects might move to contract, assuming they are approved. Sean McGrath has asked DWP to confirm timelines.

#### **4. Growth Deal Skills Capital**

- 4.1 Edwin Booth visited the University of Cumbria's campus in Lancaster to meet the new vice chancellor, Professor Julie Mennell and to undertake a tour of the evolving Teaching Hub which will be a focal point for health and social care provision. The hub will open in September 2017. See here for press release: <http://www.lancashirelep.co.uk/news/archive/2017/lep-uni-cumbria-health-social-care.aspx>

#### **5. Events**

- 5.1 The Skills Hub was invited to be the key note speaker at the Lancaster & District Chamber of Commerce Christmas lunch. This gave opportunity to speak to 90+ business representatives about the apprenticeship reforms and the levy, and to promote engagement with the Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network. Enterprise Advisers for the Morecambe schools have been secured for the network via the Chamber.
- 5.2 The Skills Hub presented at the City Deal Construction Hub. This gave opportunity to speak to 50 construction business representatives about the apprenticeship reforms and the levy, and to promote engagement with schools to inspire young people, through for example, the Lancashire Enterprise Adviser Network.
- 5.3 A roundtable was organised in response to a skills shortage raised by both the East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce and the Lancaster & District Chamber of Commerce. The roundtable focused on the shortage of skilled HGV drivers in Lancashire (and the industry generally), and involved the 2 chambers, 3 employers, DWP and Mantra, LanTraining and the Transport Teaching Academy. Barriers to entry for young people were highlighted, as were issues of retention – a number of solutions were discussed which will be taken forward over the coming months.
- 5.4 The Skills Hub volunteered to judge two categories of the Red Rose Awards 2017. The judging day took place earlier this month – the calibre was extremely high and difficult decisions were made!

#### **6. Digital Advantage**

- 6.1 Digital Advantage has engaged with 10 education institutions and is delivering the programme to 129 young people in eight of the 10 institutions. A group of NEET young people will now be involved in the project which replaces a potential group at a School Sixth Form, the school disengaged after initially showing interest. The final two groups will start the programme by the end of



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February and this should take the number of young people engaged above 150.