



## LEP – Sub Committee

### LEP - Lancashire Skills and Employment Advisory Panel

**Private and Confidential: NO**

**Date:** Wednesday, 12 June 2019

### **European Social Funds (ESF) – Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Opt-in Projects Development Plans**

Appendices A, B and C refer

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#### **Executive Summary**

This paper seeks approval for the development plans for the ESFA Opt-in projects in Lancashire:

- NEET ('Moving On') - Appendix A
- Skills Support for the Unemployed ('Access to Employment') - Appendix B
- Skills Support for the Workforce - Appendix C

The development and approval of a plan is a requirement of the contract specification for each of these projects between the provider and the ESFA.

#### **Recommendation**

The committee is asked to approve the Development Plans for the ESFA Opt-in projects Skills Support for the Workforce, Skills Support for the Unemployed and NEET.

## **Background and Advice**

### **1 Background**

- 1.1 The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is a national opt-in Agency for European Social Funds (ESF). The ESFA match fund the ESF programme nationally to enable local ESF funds to be drawn down for local project activity.



LEPs allocate funds from their local ESF allocations to enable projects to be procured and contract managed by the ESFA under the opt-in. LEPs provide a steer on strategic priorities as per the Strategic Economic Plan and Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework and in Lancashire, have established local Steering Groups to ensure that activity is aligned with strategic priorities.

- 1.2 Under the previous opt-in programmes which ran from 2016 to 31 March 2019 there was a requirement for Engagement Activity/Capacity Building Plans. These plans had a specific funding allocation totalling £1.01m across 3 projects. The plans included and delivered activity such as the Lancashire Labour Market Toolkit, the Lancashire Pilot Skills Pledge, the Escalate System, the Opportunities Map, research projects, and capacity development programmes for delivery staff (including several sessions on mental health awareness). A specific amount of funding was included in each plan for the three Strategic Partnership manager positions. The Strategic Partnership Manager roles were intended:
  - to ensure local priorities were addressed by the projects in-line with the evidence base and Skills and Employment Strategic Framework
  - to promote the availability of the projects and liaise with key agencies such as Jobcentre Plus, business groups, local authorities and other key stakeholders
  - to ensure that projects added value and were complementary to each other and to mainstream provision, and to aid effective referrals
  - to form and chair steering groups for the projects, bringing together key stakeholders.
- 1.3 New projects for Skills Support for the Workforce, Skills Support for the Unemployed and NEET, were recommissioned by the ESFA with the new contracts commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019. The previous tenders were locally developed and had significant LEP input, the new tenders were nationally developed by the ESFA and contained limited local input. This resulted in a reduction in funds allocated to capacity building and an expectation that any development activity would be embedded in the delivery plan.
- 1.4 The previous provider for NEET (Preston's College) was awarded the new contract, Skills Support for the Workforce was awarded to The Growth Company, Manchester and Skills Support for the Unemployed was awarded to PeoplePlus.

## **2 Development Plans**

- 2.1 Whilst the capacity building and development plans for the previous projects were developed locally, the ESFA has issued a template to all new projects for completion of development plans. The completed templates for all three projects are attached.



- 2.2 In the previous round of projects, additional funding lines were awarded for capacity/development plans for Skills Support for the Workforce and Skills Support for the Unemployed. This was quite a considerable budget of £490,000 and £375,000. There was no such funding line for the NEET project. In the new round, and as reported at previous committee meetings, there is only £20,000 for Skills Support for the Workforce and no such funding line for either Skills Support for the Unemployed or NEET.
- 2.3 As the role of the Strategic Partnership Manager has been seen to add value to the previous projects, the Director of the Skills and Employment Hub negotiated with the providers of the new projects to retain this as a full time position for the larger projects (Skills Support for the Workforce and Skills Support for the Unemployed) and as an 0.2 FTE for the smaller NEET project (previously 0.4 FTE). The accountable bodies employ the managers and deploy the resource to the Skills & Employment Hub.
- 2.4 The remainder of the activities in the development plans have been agreed between the provider, the Strategic Partnership Managers and the Skills and Employment Hub Director as desirable and achievable outcomes, given the reduced resources available.
- 2.5 With the retention of the Strategic Partnership Managers and the realisation of these new development plans, it is expected that the momentum of the previous projects will be carried forward for the benefit of residents, employees and businesses of Lancashire.

### 3 Recommendations

- 3.1 The Panel is asked to approve the Development Plans for the ESFA Opt-in projects Skills Support for the Workforce, Skills Support for the Unemployed and NEET.

### List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

insert details