

LEP - Skills and Employment Advisory Panel

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 10th November, 2021 at 8.00 am at the Zoom Virtual Meeting - Zoom

Present

Amanda Melton CBE

Mark Allanson	Nicola Mortimer
Peter Caney	Kate Quinn
Neil Conlon	Alison Robinson
Ruth England	Wendy Robinson
Edwina Grant OBE	Liz Tapner
Gareth Lindsay	

Observers

Paul Evans, Area Lead, BEIS, Cities and Local Growth Unit
David Gregson, Special Projects Manager, Research and Enterprise Services, Lancaster University
Stephen Jones, Head of FE Territorial Team, ESFA
Heather Murray, Senior Partnership Manager Lancashire, DWP

In Attendance

Mark Bowman, CEO, Inspira
Kerry Harrison, Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership Coordinator
Sarah Kemp, Chief Executive Officer, Lancashire Enterprise Partnership
Dr Michele Lawty-Jones, Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub Director
Geoff Mason, Policy Manager, N&W Lancashire Chamber of Commerce
Lisa Moizer, Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub Coordinator
Kay Vaughan, Careers Hub Lead
Andy Milroy, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Lancashire County Council
Garth Harbison, Democratic Services Officer, Lancashire County Council

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Professor Wendy Robinson, Pro Vice Chancellor for Education, Lancaster University, who had been nominated by Lancaster and UCLan to replace Lynn Livesey, who was retiring. The nomination was to be formally approved at the LEP Board later in the month.

Apologies were received from Bev Robinson OBE and Neil Shaw.

2. Declaration of Interests

None were disclosed.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September and Matters Arising

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2021 are confirmed as an accurate record.

4. Up-date from the Lancashire Skills & Employment Hub and partners

Michele Lawty-Jones, Director of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub, presented the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub and partners update report which was structured against the strategic themes and priorities outlined in the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework 2021, updating on activity since the last committee meeting.

Highlights from the report were as follows:

- The Gatsby Foundation Routes Ready Project would be completed by the end of December 2021. It was pleasing to report that agreement had been reached with the Lancashire Colleges and the Gatsby Foundation to support continuation of the T Level Routeway Networks for two years, giving sustainability to activity through the project.
- Over 300 people had started T Level courses in Lancashire this year, more than doubling last year's number.
- Regarding Digital Workforce of the Future, there was a significant amount of activity happening this academic year across a number of programmes including TeenTech, Cyber Girls First, InnovateHer and Create Education. Thanks were given to BAE Systems for their sponsorship.
- The Careers Hub and Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership had secured research and evaluation funds through CEC under their Hub Incubation Programme which was aimed at testing and evaluating the impact of careers activities.
- Regarding Inclusive Workforce and The Adult Skills Forum, there was a collaborative piece of work underway. There had been an analysis of data looking at wards and where provision should be directed in terms of unemployed people.
- In terms of the Skills Bootcamps, through the national procurement process run by DfE, there were now 25 different bootcamps available across Lancashire.
- The work around apprenticeships and the relationship with employers was highlighted under the theme of the Skilled and Productive Workforce. The Lancashire Levy Transfer Network was now up and running.
- The Employer Skills Forum had been working together to create an overview of the Lancashire Employer Facing Offer. This offer was now live.

- The Business Health Matters Programme was now operational supported by ESF funding.
- Planning was in progress for the Skills Pledge celebration in December 2021.
- The Department for Digital Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) had undertaken an evaluation with Amion Consulting of the Digital Skills Partnerships across the country.

Comments and questions raised were as follows:

- The panel enquired about what the scale of the NEET situation was as there was a low level of interest in traineeships at the moment. There had been a slight increase in NEET during the pandemic, but moreso in the 18–24 year old age group. There had been a lot of proactive work in supporting the transition of young people from school into the post 16 destinations and this had been quite positive. Destination data and NEET data is being tracked by the Local Education Authorities.
- There were a lot of Kickstart customers reaching the end of the programme and there were webinars about apprenticeships, traineeships and other options they might want to consider. Work was being done around the benefits of apprenticeships. It was important to promote apprenticeships and traineeships.
- The question of how effective the roll out of T levels was raised. There was a phased approach to the roll out to make sure the quality was there and to enable industry placements to be built up. Feedback from young people had been positive regarding the provision.
- It was vital that the pipeline into nursing, etc, was not cut off as a result of the roll out of T Levels.
- The pandemic had hit aspects in terms of the challenges around work placements.
- BTEC Level 3 was an area which was being continually reviewed.
- It was noted that inclusion places for young people coming out of special schools was still very challenging.

Resolved: The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel noted the update from the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub and partners.

5. Lancashire Careers Hub and Enterprise Advisor Network 2021/22

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mark Bowman, CEO Inspira, and Kay Vaughan, Careers Hub Lead.

A presentation was delivered to the panel regarding the impact of the Lancashire Careers Hub and the Enterprise Advisors Network to date and the priorities for the coming year.

Some of the points from the presentation were:

- The Lancashire Careers Hub was now one of the largest in the country

and had now reached full coverage, supporting all 156 secondary schools and colleges across Lancashire, including special schools and alternative providers.

- The main activities during 2020-21 had centred around developing and sharing innovative practice in relation to delivery of careers provision virtually and through a blended model, ensuring that careers provision continued during the pandemic.
- Lancashire Careers Hub had targets split between Careers Hub Waves 1 and 3 which were the timescales of when the Careers Hub started in different parts of Lancashire. Across all of the targets Lancashire was one of the highest achieving Careers Hubs.
- The plans for the academic year 2021-21 were to continue to support schools and colleges to make progress against the Gatsby benchmarks, to launch and implement a BAE sponsored programme, progress action plans with business networks, continue CPD with careers professionals in regard to T Levels and to set up and progress implementation of research and evaluation projects with the Careers and Enterprise Company.

Comments and questions raised were as follows:

- Nationally Lancashire has always been benchmarked as best practice.
- The excellent work of the Lancashire Careers Hub was noted, and how high quality sustainable networks and support have continued throughout the pandemic. Thanks were passed to the team.
- There were a lot of projects that were encouraging girls into STEM and to encourage diversity. There would likely be many opportunities and possibilities aligned with the National Cyber Force announcement and the basing of the Head Quarters in Lancashire.
- Regarding the National Cyber Force, the indicative workforce recruitment requirements were around 2000 people by 2030. They were keen to work with schools, colleges and universities.
- There was a newly established Lancashire Cyber Partnership Board. The board had a number of priority themes, one of which was around People and Skills.
- There was an opportunity to collaborate with Manchester to create a northern corridor for cyber excellence. This could be done through effective partnership working, strategic planning, capacity building and investment.
- From a health point of view there was a good presence in terms of the Career Hub. It was suggested that a link be provided to current employment opportunities within health and social care.

The panel thanked Mark Bowman and Kay Vaughan for their presentation.

Resolved: The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel noted the presentation and passed their thanks to the Careers Hub team.

7. Skills Bootcamps

It was agreed to move Item 7, 'Skills Bootcamps', to Item 6. The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Kerry Harrison, Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership Coordinator.

Digital bootcamps were piloted in Lancashire and Greater Manchester through the Fast Track Digital Workforce fund, in partnership with the Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The model was driven by employers, with employer/provider collaborations developing 12+ week bootcamp programmes, providing intensive training to fast tracking unemployed residents into hard to fill digital jobs.

The model was adopted and adapted by the DfE under the National skills Fund, with pilots taking place locally and several other areas across the country. The DfE model had an increased focus on guaranteed interviews and progression into employment or within the workplace. Following devolved pilots, Skills Bootcamps were rolled out nationally through a national procurement process focusing on digital and construction. There were now over 25 different Skills Bootcamps available in Lancashire which were summarised on the Lancashire Skills Hub website.

A qualitative evaluation of the Lancashire pilots funded by the DCMS and the DfE had been conducted by Amion Consulting. The purpose of the evaluation was to provide insight into the approach locally, and to support feedback to the DfE directly and via the National Skills Fund consultation.

The panel was given a presentation on the key findings. The headlines from the Spending Review indicated that Skills Bootcamps were to receive further funding, with the number quadrupling following the launch of a national procurement process for 'HGV Skills Bootcamps'.

Some of the points from the presentation were:

- People from the Fast Track Fund felt that one of the positives was that a community of different people had been created offering Bootcamps. It was important to have a number of skills available. This was better for training and recruitment.
- It was vital to have a clear pathway through different Skills Bootcamps. For example, the Bootcamps offered a Cyber Ready programme which took people with some coding knowledge into a basic level Cyber role. This enabled them to go on to further training.
- There was a project as part of the DfE Bootcamps which introduced people to the digital sector to make sure people were making informed decisions about the jobs they wished to pursue. there were multiple wide-ranging jobs available within Cyber and Digital.
- The consultees felt that Skills Bootcamps were a valuable way of getting people into work and to be trained specifically in what the industry needed. It was important to have a way of learning which suited everyone.
- It was vital to have a direct line of sight to employment opportunities and interviews.

- Combining the need and delivery of technical skills with broader employability support was vital.
- Recruitment in Lancashire had proved to be tricky. A lot of the Bootcamps found that they had a slow uptake of places. They had got all the people they needed on to the course but it had taken a long time. It was felt that the digital jobs were not as visible in Lancashire as they were in Manchester.
- Employer engagement was the most important part of the whole process. Having the employers involved in the design of the programme was vital as well as having them involved in teaching and mentoring.
- Suggestions for the next phase of the programme included enhancing connections between Bootcamps, embedding the Bootcamps into the overall provision of digital skills, increasing the visibility of the offer to a wider group of employers, harnessing the Bootcamp model to anticipate future digital skills needs, providing enhanced confidence building, mentoring and tech skills, recognising a broader range of positive outcomes, and supporting employers to offer more flexible and part-time digital roles.
- The bottom up approach of devolved funds to local areas was seen as beneficial in facilitating collaborations between employers and providers to meet local labour market needs – an element of this was lost when the national procurement process was introduced by DfE.

Comments and questions raised were as follows:

- It was stated that this was a great project fusing together the different needs of employers' niche areas. It was a targeted and focused training programme which accelerated towards meeting the needs of the employers. It was a great example of good collaboration.
- There was a great opportunity for the Skills Bootcamps Programme to grow with real scale and impact and be a key component in the digital skills agenda.
- Discussions were taking place with the DfE about moving into other business sectors. It was noted that the Skills bootcamps did not really lend themselves to the trade sector e.g. the construction trade. Regarding construction there was a possibility of training around drone skills as this was a growing area in the construction trade.
- It was pointed out that there would be skills gaps in green manufacturing and green construction. This was an area to be explored further.
- Intense upskilling and reskilling in manufacturing and construction would be critical in the future. A Bootcamp style short focused skills based approach could be an interesting route for the wider workforce.

Resolved: The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel;

1. Noted the contents of the report and the presentation.
2. Considered the further application of Skills Bootcamps in Lancashire and the potential to address hard to fill technical vacancies and enable Lancashire residents to fast track their skills development and secure higher value roles.

6. Skills Accelerator

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Geoff Mason, Policy Manager, N&W Lancashire Chamber of Commerce – accountable body for the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Trailblazer.

Geoff provided an update on the progress regarding the LSIP and outlined the ask of stakeholders and employers, and support from panel members.

The panel was informed that the LSIP was now officially underway as the grant funding agreement was now in place. The initial survey went live on 1st November and was shared widely. Stakeholder partners had also shared the survey widely. So far there had been a reasonable response to the survey and there was a good split between different sectors. The responses showed where businesses were finding difficulties filling skills within their business.

The next stage would be to set up focus groups around different sectors and certain themes. A range of focus groups had been set up for week commencing 15 November. There would be regular meetings every two weeks. The first meetings would look at where each of the sectors were at. Themes that would be looked at were digitalisation, internationalisation, skills and marketing, and the move to Net Zero.

It was important to get employers together to look at the results of the survey and drive forward what kind of questioning and information from businesses that was needed. This would lead into the next stage of producing recommendations for change.

The work that came out of the focus groups would define the report that would be produced at the end of March 2022. All the companies involved in the focus groups were crucial do the work being done.

Once recommendations start to emerge there would then be engagement with providers to start going through the recommendations, to see discuss skills needs and if there were any barriers to overcome to put the recommendations in place. If there were any changes required at DfE level, then this would form part of the report as well.

Stakeholder engagement officers were currently making contact with existing stakeholders to keep them informed about where everything was at and let them know about areas where they could assist.

Other areas were being looked at apart from dealing with employers to try and get an understanding of where the barriers were. Regarding unemployed people there had been useful conversations held with the DWP teams and attendance at job fairs around access to training. It was also important to find out what the employee outlook was.

The panel was informed that on the whole progress was being made. The survey

still remained open and the panel were asked if they could share it out again.

Comments and questions raised were as follows:

- Regarding the SDF Project there was a request for a person from one of the Lancashire colleges to join some of the focus groups so that providers could hear what was being said by employees and employers.
- One of the issues was that the SDF Project was running concurrently with the LSIP instead of after it. It was important to see what course of action the SDF Project was taking and see if there were any overlaps.
- It was pointed out that feedback from providers was crucial. The survey results and focus group points and recommendations would be shared and discussed with the Lancashire colleges.
- Once the recommendations had been established it was vital to get the employers sat in the focus groups and discuss how to deal with the recommendations and get their views.
- It was noted that Lancashire had a very effective Careers Hub, which enables employers to raise the profile of different sectors and jobs, and there business to attract future talent.
- All panel members had networks and are able to encourage employer participation. It was vital to get as many employers as possible engaged and involved and get their voice as well as employees.

Resolved: The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel noted the update on the Skills Accelerator.

8. Reporting to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Board

A local evaluation of the DCMS and DfE funded Skills Bootcamp pilots that took place in Lancashire was discussed – LEP Board directors to note that the evaluation had been fed into the DfE consultation regarding the National Skills Fund, and the benefits of having a locally driven approach aligned with local labour market needs, that supported collaborative approaches between employers and providers. It was hoped that this would influence future procurement.

The N&W Lancashire Chamber of Commerce provided an update on the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) trailblazer – a web page was now live with links to the initial employer skills survey and an event calendar which included a range of employer focus groups with different sectors and across different themes. LEP Board directors were encouraged to attend and engage businesses in their networks in the LSIP and the identification of skills needs: <https://www.chamberelancs.co.uk/2021/11/lancashire-local-skills-improvement-plan-lsip-focus-groups/>

9. Any Other Business

There was no Any Other Business.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for 8:00am on Wednesday 23 February 2022 via Zoom.

11. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that there would be a likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the appropriate paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as indicated against the heading to the item.

12. DWP: Plan for Jobs in Lancashire

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Heather Murray, Senior Partnership Manager Lancashire & Cumbria, DWP.

The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel was provided with a presentation on the performance to date of the Plans for Jobs initiatives led by the DWP in Lancashire.

There was a discussion regarding Kickstart Placements and the need to continue to drive the engagement of unemployed young people in the plethora of opportunities that have been made available by Lancashire employers – it was noted that approximately 50% had been filled to-date. There was also discussion regarding supporting employers to progress young employees in placements towards apprenticeships, to support sustainable employment.

Resolved: The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel noted the presentation.