

LEP - Lancashire Skills and Employment Board

**Thursday 7th March 2024 as a Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams
at 8.00 am**

Agenda

Part I (Items Publicly Available)

- 1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**
- 2. Declaration of Interests**
- 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 07 December 2023 (Pages 1 - 6)**
- 4. Matters Arising**
- 5. Lancashire County Combined Authority and Devolution**
*Verbal update from Simon Lawrence, Director of Growth and Regeneration,
Lancashire County Council*
- 6. Adult Education Budget (AEB) and Devolution (Pages 7 - 18)**
Presentation from Think UK
- 7. Update from the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub and partners
(Pages 19 - 32)**
- 8. Any Other Business**
- 9. Date of Next Meeting**
*TBC once further information regarding LEP integration into Local Authorities
is received.*



LEP - Lancashire Skills and Employment Board

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 7th December, 2023 at 8.00 am at the Teams Meeting

Present

Wes Johnson

Councillor Karen Buckley	Andrew Ireland
Peter Caney	Sarah Kemp
Helen Crossley	Nicola Mortimer
Dr Fazal Dad	Lisa O'Loughlin
Mark Davies	Liz Tapner
Nina Dixon	

Observers

Sam Blenkinsopp, DWP
Stephen Jones, DfE
County Councillor Jayne Rear, Lancashire County Council

In Attendance

Dr Michele Lawty-Jones, Director, Lancashire Skills Hub
Sara Gaskell, Manager, Lancashire Skills Hub
Kerry Harrison, Digital Skills Coordinator, Lancashire Skills Hub
Hannah Lysons, Democratic Services Officer, Lancashire County Council
Simon Lawrence, Director of Growth and Regeneration, Lancashire County Council
Geoff Mason, North and Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made by all in attendance.

Particular welcome was extended to the new FE representative, Lisa O'Loughlin, Principal and CEO of Nelson and Colne College, and the new HE representatives, Sarah Kemp, PVC of Lancaster University, and Andrew Ireland, PVC of UCLan.

Apologies had been received from Karen Quinn, Helen Warren, Paul Jones and Stephen Sykes. Sam Blenkinsopp attended on behalf of Helen Warren.

2. Declaration of Interests

None

3. Matters Arising

It was noted that a letter had been sent to the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) raising concerns regarding case loading, and a consultation was now underway with skills leads across the county around grant funding for the next academic year.

It was noted that the recommendations taken to the LEP Board regarding the Skills Bootcamps had been approved, and the outcome from the Department for Education was now awaited.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

5. Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) & Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF)

Geoff Mason, North and Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce presented an overview of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) including priorities and a roadmap, and work around developing collaborative business clusters and details of the pilot clusters. The collaborative work with the Lancashire Careers Hub regarding the work readiness of young people was noted.

Dr Fazal Dad, Blackburn College (on behalf of the Lancashire Colleges) presented an update on the Local Skills Improvement Fund 2023-25, including Skills for Sustainability; Digital, Cyber and AI Employability Skills; Farm to Fork; and the KPIs.

There was a time of questions and answers.

Resolved: that the update be noted

6. Lancashire County Combined Authority and Devolution

Simon Lawrence, Director of Growth and Regeneration, provided an update on the draft Devolution Deal for Lancashire, and the priorities of the proposed Combined County Authority.

The committee were pointed to three key documents: the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, the draft Combined County Authority proposal document, and the Devolution Deal document.

It was noted that a period of consultation had begun on 30 November and would run until 26 January. Committee members were encouraged to take part in the

consultation and to disseminate the information to employers including education, skills and employment providers and employees/residents to respond. The link to the website and the slides would be circulated to committee members.

Resolved: that:

- i. The update be noted
- ii. The link to the devolution website would be circulated to committee members for dissemination to their contacts

7. Update from the Lancashire Skills & Employment Hub and partners

Dr Michele Lawty-Jones presented a report (circulated) providing the Board with an update from the Lancashire Skills Hub and partners. The following key points were highlighted:

- The draft and refresh of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework was endorsed by the Lancashire Leaders, and will move to publication in the new year
- Additional project funding had been secured from the Careers and Enterprise Company to support the work of the Lancashire Careers Hub
- Cyber Festival Education Day had been well attended and received
- Future Workforce – the limited offer of support for young people who are NEET continued to be an area of risk and had been raised with DfE
- New employment programmes supporting the integration of refugees and economically inactive residents had been launched across Lancashire
- Wave 4 Bootcamps had attracted 546 learners this year so far
- Social Value – a workshop had been held with the Lancashire 2050 theme leads for all 8 themes
- Productive Workforce – 30 colleges and school 6th forms had signed up to the Early Connect pilot
- Economic Inactivity – the task and finish group considering the outcomes of the research was ongoing and the Work Well Partnership Programme prospectus had been launched
- Informed Approach – the Skills Pledge Celebration was taking place on Friday and 110 employers were signed up to date

Resolved: that the update was noted

8. Reporting to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership

None

9. Any Other Business

None

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next formal meeting of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Board is scheduled for 8.00am on Thursday 07 March 2024, virtually via Microsoft Teams.

11. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved: The Lancashire Skills and Employment Board considered that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items 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. Update on activity aligned with the National Cyber Force

Dr Michele Lawty-Jones and Kerry Harrison, Lancashire Skills Hub, presented an update on activity aligned with the National Cyber Force.

A number of workstream groups had been established focussing on: Industry collaboration; research and innovation; infrastructure and preparing the sites; and people and skills. There were also a number of task and finish groups helping drive the work.

Activity was outlined which is engaging and raising the awareness of cyber careers throughout the educational journey, from primary through to Higher Education (HE). The Cyber Fairy Tales pilot with primary schools was a success and further funds were being sought from DSIT Cyber Local. The TeenTech virtual and physical events were planned for secondary schools in March and June 2023, with the physical event almost at full capacity. There was also much activity around Higher Education and post-16 students, and work was being done to promote the various events and summer courses that were available.

The Cyber Festival was a significant success, engaging primary, Further Education (FE) and HE students throughout the education day, with an engaging panel debate held over lunchtime with a number of VIPs.

It was noted that the UK Cyber Council were developing professional routes into cyber careers, to enable cyber professionals to achieve chartered status, and the Cyber Council had attended the People and Skills workstream group, and were engaging with colleges and university about aligning provision to enable those routes.

A workshop was being planned to consider recruitment campaigns and how best to amplify job opportunities locally. It was noted that initial job opportunities would likely include a number of general roles, as well as tech roles.

Resolved: that the update was noted

think...

Preparation for devolution of skills budgets

Lancashire Skills and Employment Board

7th March 2024

Agenda Item 6

Context: Skills budget devolution in Lancashire

- Government will fully devolve the Adult Education Budget (AEB) from academic year 2026/27, subject to readiness conditions and Parliamentary approval of the required secondary legislation.
- Funding for Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJ) will also be devolved and will be ring-fenced.
- Prior to full devolution taking place, the Government will work with Lancashire CCA to support their preparations for taking on the relevant functions.
- We estimate that around £30m of Adult Education Budget is currently invested in Lancashire each year, based on learning by residents.
- Lancashire will need to meet DfE readiness conditions by May 2025 so that devolution of skills budgets can proceed. This includes an AEB strategic skills plan, along with governance, financial, legal, procurement, data etc requirements.

Developing a commissioning plan

Five key elements:

- Review strategies and labour market analysis
- Analyse existing education and training delivery
- Consult Lancashire stakeholders on priorities and issues
- Investigate approaches adopted in Mayoral Combined Authorities
- Develop AEB strategy and commissioning plan

Indicative Commissioning Priorities

Investing devolved adult skills budgets to deliver elements of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework, as follows:

Future workforce

- e.g 19-24 technical education pathways, infill on 16-18 delivery, re-engagement

Inclusion

- e.g. ESOL, family learning, digital

Skills and productivity

- e.g. basic skills, short courses for unemployed/employed, Sector Work-Based Academies, Skills Bootcamps, targeted L3 growth

Social Value

- Integrated into commissioning processes

Lancashire stakeholder feedback

Still ongoing but emerging themes:

- Recognise that AEB sits as one budget alongside other budgets: apprenticeships; 16-19; higher education; student loans; skills bootcamps; free courses for jobs; Multiply etc.
- Change should be priorities-driven but incremental, noting potential to destabilise providers if change is implemented poorly or too quickly.
- General agreement that investment should target areas of highest need but caution from some about making assumptions about the capacity of the existing infrastructure in all areas with high need.
- Sense that greater collaboration across providers/skills budgets to coordinate activities is desirable, as well as with other related budgets working with the same individuals (health, justice, etc)
- Employer skill needs will change and grow, requiring more mid-career reskilling of adults.
- Interest in/cautious support for greater emphasis on the outcomes from some AEB-funded delivery.
- Acknowledgement that Lancs CCA cannot be expected to manage hundreds of providers, but care needed to ensure that valuable/niche provision is not lost in this process
- Unmet needs include 19-25s at risk of economic inactivity; ESOL and pre-ESOL; basic IT in high demand

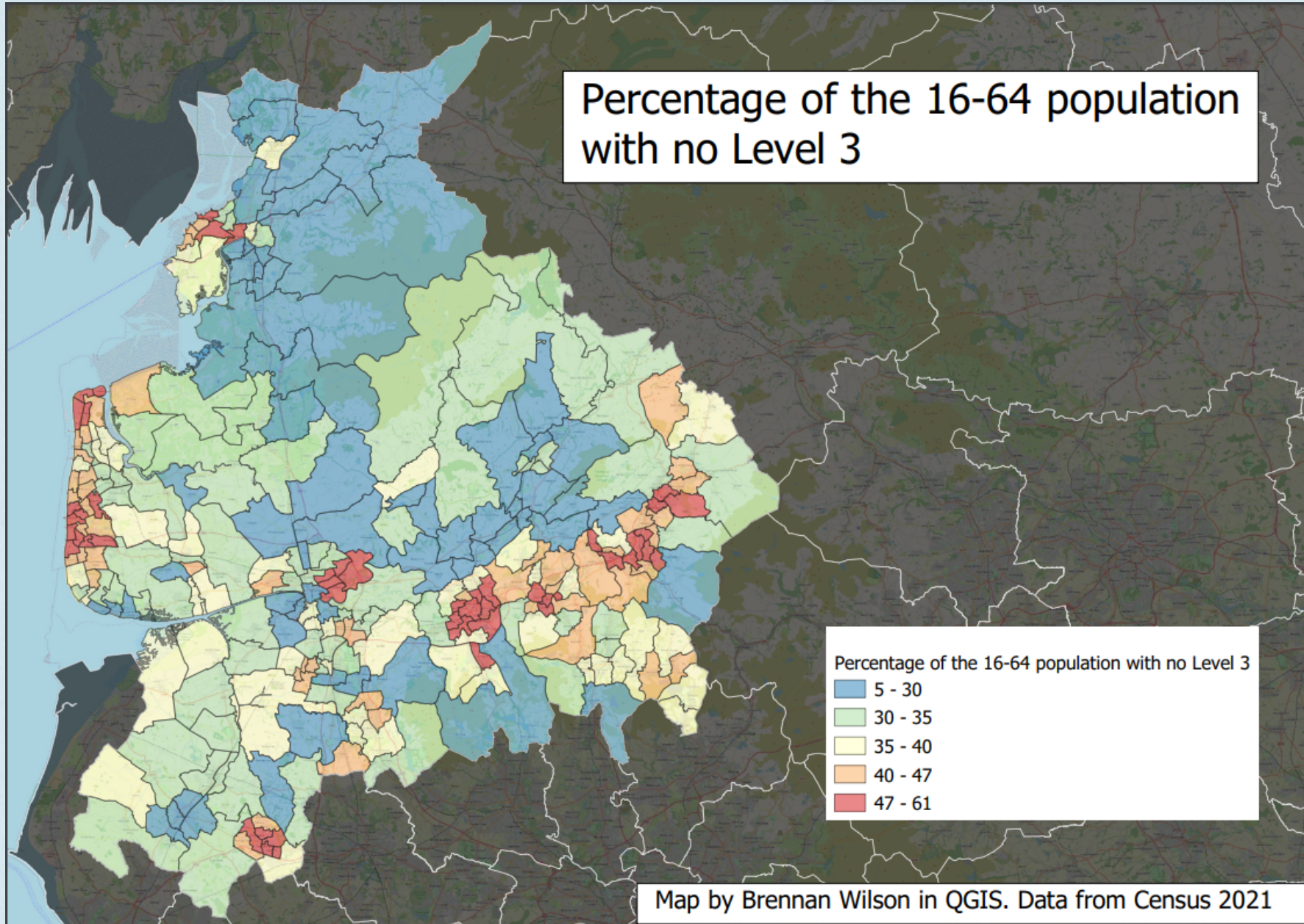
Mayoral Combined Authorities' feedback

Still ongoing, emerging themes include:

- Year one activity focused on effective administration of devolved budgets, be ready from day one. Admin cost usually 2-3% of budget.
- Legal position is that colleges, local authorities and a small number of designated institutions should be grant funded, all others procured.
- MCAs have used minimum contract values and provider frameworks/dynamic purchasing systems to secure a manageable number of providers – from hundreds pre-devolution to a few dozen now
- Most MCAs use call-off competitions to procure in response to emerging needs.
- Allocations to providers have adjusted in accordance with their delivery vs plan (not just in relation to spend). Some use of outcome targets in provider plans.
- Lots of examples of funding rule flexibilities, e.g. raising the low wage threshold; extending L2 digital and L3 entitlements; reforming pre-employment training; funding licences to practice etc
- It has taken time for providers to adapt to MCA's priorities and expectations of delivery.

The wards with the highest proportion of the population without a Level 3 are:

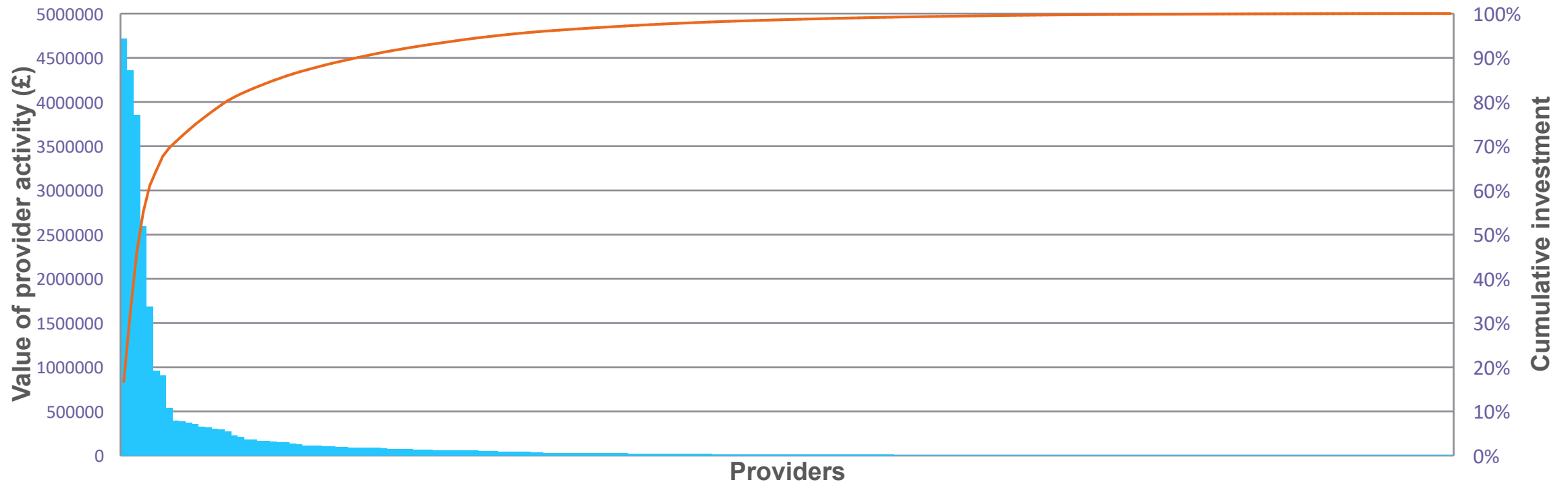
- Central (Hyndburn)
- Bloomfield (Blackpool)
- Daneshouse with Stoneyholme (Burnley)
- Bradley (Pendle)
- Blackburn Central (Blackburn)
- Whitefield & Walverden (Pendle)
- Claremont (Blackpool)
- Bastwell & Daisyfield (Blackburn)
- Audley & Queen's Park (Blackburn)
- Digmaor (West Lancashire)



Focussing the investment

In 2021/22, a total of 205 providers were funded by the ESFA to deliver Adult Skills provision to Lancashire residents, delivering learning with a value of c£28m. The top 17 providers delivered over 80% of the funded activity, with the remaining 178 providers delivering an average contract value of less than £30k. In addition to Adult Skills provision, approximately £7m of Community Learning will have supported Lancashire residents in this year.

Notional AEB funding, by provider, for Lancashire residents' learning and cumulative funding distribution, 2021/22



Potential approach to commissioning

Key features:

- Grant to colleges, local authority providers and 'designated institutions in FE' (Cardinal Newman and WEA)
- Investment driven by an agreed Plan.
- Budget to accelerate delivery of priorities secured by cutting the long 'tail' of providers, freeing up resources.
- Tender for key themes/priorities

Next steps

Working with the project steering group:

- Complete Lancashire and MCA consultations (early March)
- Develop draft AEB Strategy and Commissioning Plan (mid March)
- Refine and submit AEB Strategy and Commissioning Plan (end March)
- Support and advice to the Lancashire Skills Hub team to meet DfE readiness conditions (end March onwards)

Questions, comments welcome

Feedback is welcome on any/all of this, in particular:

- Do you have any questions and comments about the feedback from Lancashire stakeholders and MCAs presented in this slide pack?
- Do you agree that indicative commissioning priorities should focus on delivering Lancashire's Skills and Employment Strategic Framework?
- What changes within Lancashire – labour market, wider community - do you think are of importance for Lancashire's AEB strategy and commissioning plan?
- What is your view of the potential key features of Lancashire's approach to commissioning?



LEP – Sub Committee

LEP - Lancashire Skills and Employment Board

Private and Confidential: NO

Date: Thursday, 7 March 2024

Update from the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub and partners

Report Author: Dr Michele Lawty-Jones, Director of the Lancashire Skills & Employment Hub, michele.lawty-jones@lancashirelep.co.uk

Executive Summary

This paper provides an overview of activity since the last formal committee meeting in December 2023.

Recommendation





The committee is asked to review the contents and raise any questions or clarification points at the meeting.

The update from the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub (Skills Hub) and partners is structured against the strategic themes and priorities outlined in the [Refreshed Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework 2024-29](#).


The report has pivoted against the refreshed priorities and actions in the new framework and will evolve as the Framework is socialised and embedded into partner strategies and business plans.

Key successes and risks are summarised, with a fuller update on the following pages against the themes.



Theme	Highlights - Successes	Risks
Future Workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools and colleges in the Lancashire Careers Hub are achieving sustainable progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks, with Lancashire above the average on every Benchmark and at 6.4 of 8 (target of 5.5) - The DfE/UCAS Early Connect pilot is underway with the majority of sixth forms and colleges participating in Lancashire - Securing of funds to enable the roll out of Cyber Fairy Tales to a further 60 primary schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engagement of employers in the work readiness survey (sufficient sample size) - Slow start to Early Connect limits the success of Year 1 of the pilot - delay to FE Bursary Programme with UKStratCom, awaiting sign off from government
Inclusive Workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparation for AEB devolution progressing through support from DfE and consultancy - Exceeded Wave 4 learner starts, with 130 Lancashire residents securing a new role or progressing in employment to-date - Digital Freedoms 18+ distributed 920 devices with skills support to enable digitally excluded residents to access health and wellbeing services online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Progress regarding establishment of CCA to enable devolution of AEB - Learning from Wave 3 Skills Bootcamps (with 38% of learners progressing) enables a greater percentage of outcomes in Wave 4 - Enough good quality tenders to award all Skills Bootcamp funds
Skilled & Productive Workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young Apprenticeship Grant programme well received by employers – 15 grants of 130 left - Multiply delivery established with Year 2 Quarter 3 targets exceeded across the LCC area. Community of Practice supporting engagement and delivery - The ICB and partners including the Skills Hub submitted a tender for a WWPP vanguard across Lancashire and South Cumbria, supported by robust LMI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some Multiply interventions targeting specific demographics (care leavers, (ex) offenders, employers) have been more challenging. Providers are prioritising these groups for Q4 delivery - Unsuccessful WWPP bid – need for task and finish group to identify activities that can be taken forward locally regardless
Social Value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Embedding social value within two landmark developments has taken a step forward (Lancashire Central and Farrington Cricket Club) - The Skills Hub have continued to engage employers and providers presenting at events and delivering a workshop to Skills Pledge employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inability to secure buy in from external partners, including, for example NCF and contractors



 **Future Workforce:** working with education and business to establish a talent pipeline and future workforce that meets the current and future demands of the local labour market.

- Provide excellent careers provision from primary school to college, underpinned by local Labour Market Intelligence (LMI).
- Embed employability skills in careers and wider curriculum.
- Build the Digital and Low Carbon Workforce of the future.
- Technical Education Vision: Engage more young people in Technical Education.
- Support young people who are NEET or at risk or becoming NEET.

Lancashire Careers Hub

Autumn Term progress against targets for the Lancashire Careers Hub for the academic year can be seen in the table below. Schools and colleges are currently achieving an average of 6.4 Benchmarks against a target of 5, with continued performance above the national average on every one of the eight benchmarks. 39% of schools and colleges are achieving all 8 Benchmarks against a target of 20%.

	Careers Hub Total 2023/24 (Based on December CEC data)	
	Target %	Actual %
Gatsby Benchmark 1 (Careers Plan)	80%	83%
Gatsby Benchmark 5 (Employer Encounters)	80%	87%
Gatsby Benchmark 6 (Experiences of the workplace)	65%	74%
Average Benchmark Achievement	5	6.44

The Lancashire Careers Hub is working in collaboration with the Chambers of Commerce to support the work readiness of young people. This is in response to the LSIP feedback from employers referencing the need for young people to become more work ready. A work ready survey is currently live to analyse the top work ready attributes needed by employers when recruiting young people. The outcome will be the production of a common work ready language for Lancashire which will be mapped against the Skills Builder Framework. This will support schools and colleges in the delivery of employability skills alongside supporting employers to embed this language in their outreach, early careers work and recruitment processes. The results of the survey will be available by Easter with the common language framework launched in June 24.

25 Teachers and Lecturers across Lancashire had the opportunity to visit GCHQ in January, this enabled curriculum specialists and Careers Leaders to understand how cyber careers can be embedded in the curriculum and inform teachers of the outreach activities available from GCHQ, National Cyber Force and IN4 Group. Teacher Encounters will also be offered in a wider range of sectors across the Spring and Summer terms.

Digital Skills Partnership

There are touch points now established at every point across the educational journey to promote digital and cyber careers – from primary through to higher education. The Teen Tech festival has launched on-line and will be followed by a face-to-face event on 20th June, which is fully subscribed



by schools. Eleven schools and colleges have now achieved CyberFirst recognition. The Digital Advantage programme, co-funded by LCC and Future U is in delivery and approval is awaited regarding the FE Bursary Programme with UKStratCom.

Cyber Local funding has now been confirmed by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) for three projects and the sponsorship of TeenTech. This includes the roll out of Cyber Fairy Tales to a further 60 primary schools and Cyber Ark which is aimed at engaging people from ethnic minority communities in East Lancashire in a 'Tech Discovery' programme to develop cyber skills and consider career pathways.

Apprenticeships and Early Connect Pilot

Parental engagement is a key focus of the Apprenticeship and Technical Education (ATE) initiatives this academic year, this includes delivery of ATE parent workshops by the Lancashire Work Based Learning Forum funded by the Careers Hub, alongside employee awareness sessions in partnership with the Lancashire Cornerstone Employers.

The Early Connect pilot with DfE and UCAS to raise the visibility of apprenticeship with sixth form and college leavers started formally in October 2023. Lancashire is one of three pilot areas, alongside the Northeast and London. An aspirational target of 185 additional apprenticeship starts has been set by the DfE for Lancashire eighteen-year-olds for the period July 2024 to July 2025. This is a 15% increase on starts recorded in 2022/23.

The Skills Hub and partners have engaged 92% of sixth forms and colleges within Lancashire in the pilot. The DfE, UCAS and Amazing Apprenticeships are now delivering a programme of CPD and webinars to school/college staff. The CPD aims to arm staff with the understanding and knowledge to support students to apply successfully for apprenticeships. So far participation in the CPD has been mixed with predominantly colleges who deliver apprenticeships being the main participants.

There is also the option via the UCAS portal for students to ask for support – this information will be shared with the Skills Hub, who are working with partners to agree the different mechanisms for support, whether this be through web-based resources, the up and coming Apprenticeship Expo, a named person in their sixth form or college, National Career Service or through workshops via the Lancashire Work Based Learning Forum. An aspect of the pilot is feeding back young people's experiences of applying and securing apprenticeships.

To increase apprenticeship starts, there also needs to be an increase in apprenticeship vacancies with a start date in the summer or autumn. Through partnerships with business networks and engagement activities, the Skills Hub is highlighting the benefits of apprenticeships, advertising vacancies earlier, funding and incentives.

NEET Prevention

CEC funding has been secured to research and develop a framework and good practice guide focused on interventions aimed at engaging young people identified as at risk of NEET in Key Stage 3. The project, which is being delivered in partnership with LCC, has now been commissioned with the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). The project will run from February through to July 2024.



Inclusive Workforce: supporting unemployed and inactive residents into sustainable employment.

- Accessible adult careers provision informed by local LMI.
- Effective use of Adult Education Budget (AEB) to improve the skills and employability of Lancashire’s people.
- Work collaboratively with employers, DWP and employment providers to support more people into good jobs.
- Sector specific initiatives targeted at areas with labour market demand (for example, Skills Bootcamps).
- Research growth in economic inactivity in Lancashire.

Adult Education Budget (AEB)

The Skills Hub are working in collaboration with Lancashire AEB providers to test new provision which will provide a bridge to Skills Bootcamps, following feedback from Jobcentre Plus (JCP) that customers needed a 'step up' to engage in the programme. Lancashire Adult Learning, in partnership with the Skills Hub, utilised AEB funding to deliver a pilot Pre-Skills Bootcamp course in December 2023. Out of 9 learners who began the programme, 3 successfully completed and progressed to a Skills Bootcamp. Following a review of the pilot, adjustments have been made to improve success rates. The Skills Bootcamp Launchpad (Pre-Skills Bootcamp) will start delivery in late Spring 2024. JCP and providers will refer learners who require additional support and confidence to begin a Skills Bootcamp.

Two initial meetings have taken place with the DfE to discuss the process regarding the devolution of AEB to the proposed Lancashire Combined County Authority. Information has been shared regarding the process and the AEB Strategic Skills Plan that will be required to meet the readiness conditions, which will enable the DfE to then progress secondary legislation to enable funds to be devolved locally. Consultancy support has been commissioned, as signalled in the last report – a presentation of initial findings and questions will be provided at the meeting.

Skills Bootcamps

Wave 4 (2023/24)

Skills Bootcamp providers have enrolled 812 learners to date with a few cohorts planned to start in February and March which will increase the number further, this exceeds the DfE target which was 700 learners. To date 199 learners have been offered their guaranteed interview and 130 learners have achieved successful outcomes into employment or progressing in their current role. Delivery ceases on the 31st of March 2024, however providers have 6 months post-delivery to further support the participants to gain sustainable employment or increased responsibility in their current roles. The full list of Skills Bootcamps available through the Lancashire programme is detailed on the Skills Hub website: <https://www.lancshireskillshub.co.uk/skillsbootcamps/>

Wave 5 (2024-25)

The Skills Hub submitted a proposal to the Department for Education (DfE) for £6.4m of grant funding for Wave 5 (2024/25). The full amount of this was granted and the grant offer received. The target number of learners for Wave 5 is 1,714. Funds are being awarded through a mix of contract extensions and an Invitation to Tender (ITT) process. Contracts are being extended with 12 Wave 4 providers who will begin delivery from April 2024. Following two market engagement events, the ITT process launched pre-Christmas and is now closed. The Skills Hub team, with support from LCC's procurement team, are currently in the process of reading, moderating, and selecting the successful proposals from the 48 providers who submitted an eligible proposal. The successful new providers



will begin delivery in May. Two new Skills and Employment Project Officers are being recruited to support contract management, following the growth in the programme.

Employment support more widely and working collaboratively

The Skills Hub has been supporting local authorities in their endeavours to commission provision to support NEET, unemployed and economically inactivity provision using UK Shared Prosperity Funds (UKSPF). Since the last report, support has been provided to both Wyre and Lancaster through the sharing of LMI and by hosting engagement sessions with local skills and employment providers to plan for Year 3. Provision in Chorley and South Ribble is due to launch in April 2024 for the final year of the programme.

The table below provides an overview of UKSPF provision that is now live or about to be launched and pan-Lancashire programmes targeted at unemployed and economically inactive. Escalate has been up-dated accordingly so that information is up to date for referrals organisations and residents who are searching for employment provision.

Programme	Details	Location
Move Forward	Funded by the UKSPF Active Lancashire and Selnet have collaborated on the Move Forward program in Preston and Pendle, providing support for economically inactive residents until March 2024.	Preston/ Pendle
The Bridge Project	Operating under Rossendale Works, Active Lancashire manages The Bridge Project, helping economically inactive individuals into work.	Rossendale
Burnley Together Steps to Employment	Calico Ltd supports economically inactive residents in Burnley under UKSPF funding, addressing local employment barriers.	Burnley
Lancaster Employability Support	Calico Ltd supports economically inactive residents in Lancaster under UKSPF funding, addressing local employment barriers.	Lancaster
Fylde Focus Employment Programme	The Fylde Focus Employment Programme is targeted at young people aged between 15 – 24 years who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and unemployed adults 25+.	Fylde
The Platform	The Platform is a service for unemployed 16 to 24 year olds to help them find a job, access training or education.	Blackpool
Blackpool Community Navigators	Intensive wrap around support via a team of navigators to 200 economically inactive Blackpool residents living in the most disadvantaged wards who are furthest away from the labour market, including help with practical issues and navigating systems, such as Welfare Benefits.	Blackpool
Work and Health Programme	The Ingeus' Work and Health Programme targets individuals with health issues until September 2024.	Pan Lancashire
WHP Pioneer	WHP Pioneer programme serves as a pilot to support economically inactive residents to inform and phase into Universal Support.	Pan Lancashire
Individual Placement Support	Lancashire's IPS programmes deliver targeted employment support across the 14 districts for individuals undergoing mental health and/or substance abuse treatment.	Pan Lancashire



Refugee Employment Programme	Refugee Employment Programme assists refugees aged 18-66 by providing support for employment, integration, and language.	Pan Lancashire
Restart Scheme	G4S deliver the Restart Scheme in Lancashire delivering employment support for those unemployed longer than 9 months. G4S use a supply chain model with local Lancashire organisations delivering on behalf of them.	Pan Lancashire

The Skills Hub, via the Lancashire Skills Pledge, has been working with Lancashire employers to explore the benefits of hiring individuals currently unemployed and engaging in employment programmes. Partnerships have enabled the Skills Hub to outline how employers can actively engage in employment programmes by offering guaranteed interviews, work placements, interview technique sessions, and sector-specific training to help individuals develop their work ready skills. In December 2023, the Skills Hub facilitated guaranteed interviews with One Beyond, resulting in 30 individuals being interviewed, with 10 successfully securing positions.

Whilst the closure of the European Social Fund (ESF) programme has reduced the amount of employment provision for Lancashire residents, organisations continue to collaborate to move Lancashire's residents closer to the labour market. The Adult Skills Forum facilitated by the Skills Hub works in partnership to ensure residents are connected with Lancashire's skills and employment activities, promoting innovation and complementary activity.

Universal Support

As a result of the Government's review of workforce participation and rising economic inactivity rates, DWP have introduced a package of measures including Universal Support. These measures were announced in the Spring Statement earlier this year and expanded at the Autumn Statement (this also includes WorkWell which is covered in the next section). Universal Support will primarily support unemployed and economically inactive residents with a disability or health condition (or other form of disadvantage, depending on priorities in local areas) to start, stay and succeed in work through a prescribed supported employment model.

Initial conversations with the Universal Support policy leads at DWP and Lancashire colleagues (Skills Hub, LCC, and Blackburn with Darwen and Blackpool Councils) have taken place to discuss the programme, alongside attendance at a number of national webinars. DWP intend on publishing guidance late Spring, with view to Combined Authority and LEP areas submitting delivery plans over the summer to enable the programme to launch in phases from the Autumn. LCC have been delivering a Local Supported Employment DWP pilot successfully, targeting people with learning disabilities and mental health conditions. It is intended that this programme be extended and pivot into the wider Universal Support offer to provide the foundations for developing and growing the Lancashire programme.

Universal Support will complement the range of offers evolving post-ESF including the WorkWell Partnership Programme (WWPP), local offers of UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), individual placement support programmes (IPS), Restart, and the Work and Health Programme.

Digital Freedoms 18+

The second iteration of the Digital Freedoms project has now been delivered via Selnets. The project was primarily funded through covid recovery funds from LCC. The programme targeted digitally excluded residents, distributing 920 devices with skills support to improve resident's confidence in



accessing online services, particularly health related – the aim being to improve health and wellbeing, reduce social isolation and improve employability.

Lancashire Libraries added an additional grant of £10k to purchase MiFi devices and gave access to the Good Things Foundation Data Bank and offered skills support alongside the Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations involved in the project.

A total of 920 digitally excluded residents were supported through the project including:

- 480 – socially isolated
- 270 – no local support network
- 874 – financially excluded
- 208 – poor physical health
- 277 – poor mental/emotional health and well-being

Feedback from beneficiaries included: *"Learning how to use new technology and look for information has helped me feel digitally aware and more independent. I find online banking easier too"* and *"This has made a massive difference. I can now order online medication and I have access to a trauma group support and therapy. I have been using mind-focus and sleep apps too"*



Skilled & Productive Workforce: working with business to drive up skills in Lancashire's workforce to boost productivity.

- Retain and attract graduates with Lancashire employers.
- Technical Education Vision: Growth in Apprenticeships.
- Reskill and Upskill the Lancashire Workforce through flexible and accessible provision.
- Improve the health and wellbeing of Lancashire's Workforce.

Graduate Retention

A working group with the Lancashire based universities met last year to consider national data and to scope the priorities in the refreshed Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework regarding graduate retention. A data dashboard is in development, with view to bringing back together the group to take forward the actions.

Lancashire Young Apprenticeships Grants

The Lancashire Young Apprenticeship Grants programme, funded by LCC, was extended to provide 130 grants (from 100). This has enabled the Skills Hub to continue to successfully incentivise SMEs to recruit (who have not recruited an apprentice for at least two years). With just fifteen grants remaining, the Skills Hub is currently utilising the grant to align with the goals of the Early Connect pilot by incentivising SMEs to recruit apprentices for summer 2024. This focus means that the grant is only available for recruiting and will not be awarded for upskilling staff. As summer approaches this restriction may be lifted.

Multiply

Multiply has continued to perform well in Quarter 3 of its second year of delivery across Lancashire. In the LCC area 110% of learner starts have been achieved and 96% of spend for the 23/24 financial year. This takes the project's overall performance to 129% of learner starts achieved and 100% of spend achieved in Year 2. The Skills Hub is working closely with providers to ensure they are targeting specific



groups of participants to meet their profiled outputs for each intervention of Multiply – engaging (ex) offenders, care leavers and employers has proved challenging. The DfE expressed their satisfaction in the performance of Multiply in the LCC area in the quarterly progress meeting.

A Community of Practice was held on the 25th of January 2024, focused on best practice for achieving participant targets for interventions that are proving more difficult to deliver against. A further Community of Practice in partnership with Blackpool, and Blackburn with Darwen, will be held on 27th March. This will focus on case studies and best practice for engaging employers and supporting parents to help their children with numeracy.

Eunoia Associates have been appointed to undertake an evaluation of Multiply in LCC, Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen, to inform the delivery of Year 3 of Multiply and future projects. An interim report is due in May 2024, and final report in May 2025.

The new Project Manager, Nicola Lee, joined the Skills Hub in December and has been working closely with the LCC's External Investment team to ensure Multiply remains on track to achieve its targets. Nicola and the team are preparing for the third and final year of Multiply. There has been no guidance to-date from government regarding next steps post March 2025 (noting that the programme sits under the UKSPF umbrella).

Economic Inactivity - 'Stemming the Flow'


As previously reported, the deep dive into the rise in Economic Inactivity has been published and is available via the Skills Hub evidence base: <https://www.lancashireskillshub.co.uk/our-people/evidence-base/reports/> The headlines of the study have been presented at a range of forums, including the Lancashire Local Authority Leaders and the Integrated Care Partnership.

The Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) submitted a £4.5m bid for the Work Well Partnership Programme (WWPP), the bid was developed by a task and finish group including the Skills Hub, Integrated Care Board (ICB), upper tier authorities, Chamber of Commerce and VCFSE. The outcome will be reported early April. The programme focuses on residents in employment and newly unemployed residents who are at risk of economic inactivity due to disability or health conditions.

The task and finish group is continuing to meet, with a workshop planned for the 4th March. The aim of the workshop is to prepare for WWPP, should the bid be successful, but to also consider integration of health and employment support, in line with the recommendations of the study.

The Skills Hub and Boost are currently working with DWP on a short 'test and learn' project to offer subsidised Occupational Health Service to SMEs and employees with health conditions. The short project is designed to test the appetite of SMEs for Occupational Health Services to see whether this will contribute to 'Stemming the Flow' of residents entering unemployment due to health conditions and to enable employers to retain skills.



	<p>Social Value: providing a more consistent approach to capturing Social Value that contributes to achieving Lancashire 2050 priorities</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a shared Social Value framework, building on existing good practice. • Embed Social Value into Lancashire 2050. • Influencing anchor employers and public sector organisations to gain wider buy-in to Social Value. 	
<p>Embedding Social Value in the National Cyber Force (NCF) programme</p>	
<p>The Skills Hub is continuing to work with partners to embed Social Value within the NCF programme. In late 2023 the team hosted a joint workshop to commence work on developing a vision and plan for capturing Social Value opportunities allied to the basing of the NCF in central Lancashire. Following the meeting the team committed to working on a Theory of Change model.</p>	
<p>Lancashire Central Development and Farrington Cricket Club</p>	
<p>The Skills Hub worked alongside Maple Grove Developments (MGD) in the lead up to the confirmation of planning permission (achieved in December 2023) for the multi-phase Lancashire Central Development. As the project progresses the Skills Hub will work with MGD to formulate fixed KPIs for each construction phase of the project. The team will also host a workshop to bring together stakeholders that can support delivery of the programme.</p>	
<p>Works have begun at Farrington Cricket Club, with some early progress being made against the project KPIs that were informed by the Skills Hub. These include a small number of Apprenticeship weeks (17), 7 new jobs created (2 within 10 miles of site), 60% local supply chain and 50% local labour. These outputs will continue to develop as the project is delivered.</p>	
<p>Working with Lancashire Local Authorities around Social Value</p>	
<p>In December 2023 the Skills Hub hosted a meeting with 7 of Lancashire's local authorities that are active around social value. Views were sought on the range of activities that would be beneficial as part of joint working. Key themes that emerged were:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more joined up approach • Increasing consistency • Events • Supporting learning and best practice. 	
<p>These results fed into the proposed activities within the revised Skills and Employment Strategic Framework and will be explored further in 2024.</p>	
<p>The team have also attended the Central Lancashire Procurement Practitioners group, alongside a range of procurers and stakeholders based in and around Central Lancashire. This provides an opportunity to shape and influence attitudes to social value amongst key groups.</p>	
<p>Embedding Social Value with Employers and providers</p>	
<p>The Skills Hub have been active in engaging with external partners around social value. The team have presented on social value at both the Skills Bootcamp and Multiply Community of Practices. Social value is embedded in the Skills Bootcamp Wave 5 ITT, as reference earlier, with 10% attributed in the scoring process.</p>	



In addition, a 90-minute workshop focused on 'Successful Social Value Bid Writing' was delivered in December to 25 businesses as part of Lancashire Skills Pledge CPD programme, receiving excellent feedback.



Informed Approach: Taking an evidence-based approach to identifying the skills and employment issues facing Lancashire's businesses and industries, prioritising and influencing locally and nationally, and working with partners to identify best practice.

Evidence Base

The open-source Evidence Base page on the Skills Hub website has received more than 900 visits, from the start of December 2023 until mid-February 2024. The Evidence Base can be viewed here: <https://www.lancashireskillshub.co.uk/our-people/evidence-base/>

Adult Education Budget (AEB) commission

The proposed devolution deal for Lancashire was announced in the Autumn statement. A consultancy agreement has been signed with ThinkUK Ltd who are reviewing governance, strategies, and models for the delivery of AEB in Combined Authorities across the country and doing an in-depth investigation into how AEB is currently utilised in Lancashire. A steering group has been established to support the consultancy. An initial presentation regarding findings will be provided at the meeting with questions to be considered by members of the committee.

College Curriculum Labour Market Intelligence Sessions

To support with business planning and curriculum planning, the Skills Hub have created a new interactive dashboard to support the Lancashire Colleges. The data presented is on a travel to learn and local authority district footprints. Insights will be presented by the Skills and Economic Intelligence Lead, Joseph Mount, to senior leaders at each of Lancashire's colleges throughout February and March 2024. Blackburn College were the first to have a session with this new intelligence tool on the 12th of December 2023. The pack of data will cover as-yet unseen insights from the 2021 Census which gives an in-depth understanding of the shape of local labour markets that is ordinarily not available from more regularly published data.

WorkWell Partnership programme (WWPP)

The WWPP submission, as referenced earlier, was supported by data and intelligence from the economic inactivity research, and solution design from the Skills Hub. The bid was for £4.5m for an 18 month programme of interventions from a multi-disciplinary team of Work and Health coaches in Lancashire. Successful bidders will be notified in Early April 2024 if successful.

Skills Pledge

The annual Skills Pledge celebration event took place at County Hall on 8th December 2023 with over 100 Lancashire businesses in attendance. County Cllr Phillippa Williamson, Pater Caney from BAE Systems and Georgia Thomas from Victrex spoke at the event and County Cllrs Jayne Rear and Aidy Riggott presented the Lancashire businesses with their certificates.

In addition, for the first this time this year, special awards were given against each pledge for those businesses that had shown outstanding commitment. The businesses selected were delighted to receive their trophy. The press release can be read here:

<https://www.lancashireskillshub.co.uk/uncategorised/lancashire-businesses-celebrated-for-commitment-to-the-lancashire-skills-pledge/>



Masterclasses for Lancashire Skills Pledge members have started with the first CPD Session on 'Successful Social Value Bid Writing' delivered to 25 businesses. There are currently 34 businesses signed up to the second masterclass on 21st Feb. This is being delivered by Lauren Capstick and the focus will be on responsible and inclusive recruitment.

Since the last update, the Lancashire Skills Pledge has continued to grow across all metrics, with the number of businesses registering up 2.6% to 387. The 387 businesses registered their interest in 1,404 pledges. The number of active skills pledges has increased from 533 to 547 pledges, and there are now 250 Skills Pledge Members. Considering individual pledges, the most popular is 'Help Young People get Work Ready' (160 active pledges).

Twitter and LinkedIn

Since November 2023, the Skills Hub Twitter profile has gained 14 new followers, with a total of 3,547 followers. The Skills Hub LinkedIn page has grown to 2,361 followers - gaining 243 new followers since the last update.



List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A

