



LEP – Sub Committee

LEP - Lancashire Skills and Employment Advisory Panel

Private and Confidential: NO

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Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership – highlights and extension

Appendix A refers

Report Author: Kerry L. O. Harrison, Digital Skills Coordinator,
Kerry.harrison@lancashirelep.co.uk

Executive Summary

The Lancashire Local Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP) was launched in partnership with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in April 2018. This paper provides the background to the partnership and highlights in relation to achievements to-date and forward activity.

The paper also confirms that further funding has been secured by DCMS from the Treasury to support the LDSP for a further year, and a grant offered to the LEP.

Recommendation

The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel is asked to note the report and extension of funding for the coordinator role.

Background and Advice

1. Background

- 1.1 To re-cap, DCMS established the National Digital Skills Partnership, in-line with ambitions laid out in the Government's Industrial Strategy, and is leading on supporting the development of trailblazer Local Digital Skills Partnerships across the country which are focused on local partners coming together to look at how best to tackle local digital skills needs across the spectrum.
- 1.2 The LDSP was the first pilot to be launched in April 2018. DCMS awarded a grant of £75k to enable the appointment of a Digital Skills Partnership Coordinator for 12 months, associated costs and funds for events. Kerry Harrison was appointed to the Coordinator role and commenced employment in November 2018 and is focused on driving activity locally and also meeting regularly with DCMS and Regional Coordinators from the 5 other trailblazer areas to support the roll out of partnerships across the Country.



- 1.3 A Steering Group for the DSP has been established, chaired by Mike Blackburn, LEP Board Director, which reports to the Skills and Employment Advisory Panel. The Steering Group have met bi-monthly since June 2018. The partnership aims to join the dots between existing good practice, highlight the good work already happening in Lancashire and implement new projects working with partners locally and nationally which add value to the existing ecosystem which are aligned to our strategic priorities.
- 1.4 The partnership is aligned with the 4 strategic themes of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework: Future Workforce, Skilled and Productive Workforce, Inclusive Workforce and An Informed Approach. Networks have been established focused on the first 3 with An Informed Approach underpinning all.

2. Highlights

- 2.1 An overview of highlights, in relation to achievements to-date and forward activity, is provided in Appendix A. Activity is aligned with the strategic themes detailed in 1.4.
- 2.2 A significant amount has been achieved in the first year of the partnership, which has accelerated since the appointment of the Coordinator in November 2018.
- 2.3 The Digital Skills Innovation Fund projects have now been contracted and are in delivery phase. A brief update by project is provided below:
 - 2.3.1 **Improving the digital skills of women in business, Clockwork City** – this project aims to support self-employed females and females in the workplace to develop their digital skills. Two cohorts of participants have been recruited in Lancaster and Skelmersdale and a total of twenty women are taking part. The face to face training sessions in each area have taken place and have all received excellent feedback. The next phase is for the participants to implement what they have learnt with access to remote support one to one mentoring.
 - 2.3.2 **Digital Marketers, NLTG** – this project aims to provide training to unemployed individuals with view to moving them into digital marketing roles, including Apprenticeships. Two cohorts of this week-long course have taken place. NLTG are working to increase the numbers on each course with Accrington JCP. Destinations following the course have included a digital marketing Apprenticeship. A third cohort will take place in October.
 - 2.3.3 **IT-Ready, CompTIA** – this project focuses on the development of IT Technicians and is replicating a very successful programme CompTIA offer in the USA. Initial marketing did not attract a large enough cohort to run the provision in September. It was felt that the timescales for the awareness raising and recruitment during the summer were too tight and new timescales have been agreed. Further work with JCP offices and other key stakeholders to raise awareness and agree processes for referrals are taking place in October. The



formal recruitment process will commence shortly after this with a deadline in January.

- 2.4 The first formal review and monitoring meetings for all three projects take place this month, although regular contact is being maintained.
- 2.5 As previously reported, it has been agreed that the £3m fund announced by Government for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) for digital Bootcamps, which is a 'test and learn' programme for driving up digital skills aligned with skills shortage vacancies, will be expanded to cover Lancashire and the Digital Skills Partnership. The Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund prospectus and application process was launched at the end of June with a deadline of the 6th September. 21 bids in total were received – 5 covering the Lancashire area. These bids are being evaluated now and bidders will be aware of the outcomes imminently.
- 2.6 The second round of this fund is set to launch in mid-November and work with local employers and providers to encourage participation will be crucial before this date. Planning has commenced on this activity.

3. Offer of further funding

- 3.1 DCMS have secured further funding from Treasury to enable the Digital Skills Partnership Coordinator role to be extended for a further 12 months (November 2020), and have offered the LEP a further £75k for salary, related costs (including any potential redundancy liabilities) and a small amount of funds for events.
- 3.2 As highlighted in Section 2, a range of activities have been delivered which have contributed to the reskilling and upskilling of Lancashire people and SMEs, and which are encouraging young people to engage in digital careers, aligning with the digital skills needs of the Lancashire labour market. The Coordinator has given a focused resource which has accelerated progress, and increased the number of partners and employers engaged in activity.
- 3.3 The LEP Board agreed receipt of this funding at the September Board Meeting.

4. Recommendation

- 4.1 The committee are asked to note the report and extension of funding for the coordinator role.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
N/A		
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
N/A		