

Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub – Lead Dr. Michele Lawty-Jones

Background

The Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub was established mid-2015, as the executive to the Lancashire Skills and Employment Board, now Skills and Employment Advisory Panel (SAP). The Hub is a strategic unit, gathering local labour market intelligence to identify skills and employment priorities, which are articulated in the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework and Technical Education Vision. The Hub works with both business and providers against 4 key strategic themes: Future Workforce, Skilled and Productive Workforce, Inclusive Workforce and Informed Approach.

Over the past 4 years the Hub has secured grant funding to accelerate the strategic work, and, as a result has built the team. The SAP and established Steering Groups have oversight of grant funded projects and performance, with strategic KPIs in the Framework which are tracked on an annual basis.

Current Activity

A key focus in the last period has been the impact of Covid-19 and the identification of key risks and priorities. A report has been produced for the Skills and Employment Advisory Panel (SAP), which will be shared with LEP Directors. Highlights from the last period are provided against the themes of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework.

Future Workforce: The proposal to the Gatsby Foundation to extend the Technical Education work, approved by the LEP Board earlier in the year, was successful (to December 2021). This will enable the collaboration with The Lancashire Colleges and business to continue, supporting the successful phasing in of T Levels from September 2020. Both the Project Manager and Officer contracts have been extended accordingly. Collaborative work is underway to negate the impact of Covid-19 for the first cohort due to start in September.

The Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hub continue to support Careers Leaders in schools and colleges and their matched business volunteer (Enterprise Advisers) to plan careers provision – there is a risk that performance against the Gatsby Benchmarks will be impacted, however much is being done to enable young people to engage with on-line encounters and experiences with employers, Apprenticeships, FE and HE. A separate paper is provided in regard to the extension of the Careers Hub across Lancashire, as proposed in the draft Local Industrial Strategy.

Skilled and Productive Workforce: The Apprenticeship Action Plan has been updated reflecting the impact of Covid-19 and short to medium term issues – this includes a focus on supporting current Apprentices, providers and understanding impact on August to October recruitment and future starts. Much is being done to lobby the Education and Skills Funding Agency and DfE.

A number of actions have been undertaken to repurpose provision to the current environment: a Skills Swap facility has been launched to help circulate people and skills around the local economy (25 posts to-date of asks and offers of help which are being promoted by the team), a package of support for furloughed workers has been developed – supporting business recovery and boosting employability, and a coordinated approach to redundancy support is in place.

Inclusive Workforce: There has been a significant focus on working with providers delivering European Social Fund (ESF) projects to lobby DWP and ESFA regarding flexibilities, so that provision can continue via on-line means. Escalate (on-line tool containing ESF and

mainstream projects that support people back into work) has been updated with the latest offers, to help referral agencies and the unemployed to identify projects effectively. Consideration will need to be given to the balance of projects focused on the long term unemployed and newly employed. The Digital Skills Partnership is working with partners to secure funding and resources to enable digital devices and data to be distributed to disadvantaged adults and young people who are struggling to access on-line services and resources.

Informed Approach: The Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) Toolkit has been refreshed and is now available on the [Skills Hub website](#) – the toolkit provides presentations, reports and a data matrix by Lancashire and the 6 Travel to Work areas. The Digital Skills Landscape research has also been completed by Ekosgen – it is intended that this be shared with the LEP Board at the September meeting, following review at the Digital Skills Partnership Steering Group (chaired by Ann Jordan) and the SAP.

Every LEP (or Mayoral Combined Authority) is expected by government to have a SAP, which operates in line with DfE guidance. A review of the Lancashire SAP earlier in the year was deemed positive. The DfE has offered a further grant of £75k to support analysis of LMI and the SAP, as referenced in the Governance Report. The funding will enable the purchase of data, software, consultancy and will contribute to the cost of the Skills and Economic Intelligence Officer, Joseph Mount. National and local data and information will continue to be collated in regard to the impact of Covid-19 to enable an informed approach to the identification of skills and employment priorities.