

## Appendix 'J'

### **Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub – Lead Michelle Lawty-Jones**

A key focus has been the impact of COVID-19 on the business and people of Lancashire. Headlines regarding activity since the last LEP Board are provide below, by the themes of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework:

**Future Workforce:** Preparation for the Careers Hub roll out has been undertaken over the summer. Recruitment with our delivery partner, Inspira has been completed, including 2 Deputy Careers Hub Leaders (internal promotions) and 3 Enterprise Coordinators who will be joining the team on the 7<sup>th</sup> September. A community of practice has been launched for the SEND schools, to prepare for the increase in SEND schools as part of the expansion. Additional funding has also been secured through the Careers and Enterprise Company Transition Fund and the Blackpool Opportunity Area Transition Fund to support the development of the Start platform with U-Explore, to enable the provision of virtual and on-line encounters and experiences with employers, colleges and universities, to adapt to the COVID-19 environment.

The Skills Hub has continued to work with colleges and employers in preparation for the first T Level cohorts in September 2020. Routeway Networks and CPD have continued via zoom, with excellent engagement. The latter includes sessions for careers professionals to enable them to embed technical education routes into careers programmes. The competition for the next round of Institutes of Technology is due to be launched by Department for Education (DfE) in the autumn – two visioning sessions have been held by the Skills Hub with colleges and universities in preparation. It has been agreed that Blackpool and The Fylde College will be the lead partner.

**Skilled and Productive Workforce:** A Lancashire Redundancy Task Force has been established with partners, including DWP/Jobcentre Plus, the National Careers Service and the accountable body of the 'Skills Support for the Workforce' programme, The Growth Company. The taskforce is meeting fortnightly and aims to provide a coordinated approach to communication with businesses affected, and a coordinated package of support. The taskforce is in communication with a range of businesses – the majority being in manufacturing (particularly Aerospace). The challenge of circulating and retaining skills is a key focus for the group, aligning with the work of the Aerospace Task Force.

**Inclusive Workforce:** The [www.skillsforwork.info](http://www.skillsforwork.info) microsite was launched at the end of June. The site was developed in direct response to COVID-19 and brings together skills and employment offers from over 50 partners for Lancashire residents. The site is easy to navigate and has buttons for furloughed workers to enhance their skills and employability, those facing redundancy, people looking for work, and a button for 16-24 year olds to access specialist support. As of 20<sup>th</sup> August, the site had received over 3,000 visits. A communications pack has been produced which enables partners to embed the offer on their website (e.g. Local Authorities, to support their residents). The Hub is employing a Graduate Intern via UCLan to undertake a social media campaign to promote the site. The site will be adapted to include details of the support available announced in the Chancellor's 'Plan for Jobs' (for example, the kickstart scheme) once details are known.

Round 2 of the £3m Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) has been completed. Fourteen projects were approved, including 8 focused in Lancashire, which aim to provide intensive digital skills training to enable individuals to move into digital vacancies (from Data Scientists and Cyber Security roles to PHP Developers). This includes projects targeted at females and BAME residents to boost diversity. The Lancashire Digital Skills

Partnership has also secured funds with SELNET and the libraries network from the Lancashire COVID-19 Community Support Fund and The Good Things Foundation to enable the distribution of approximately 400 devices to disadvantaged over 50s. The result of a Big Lottery submission is awaited, which would provide more funds to expand the scheme. A model to enable businesses to donate second hand devices to education providers is also in development.

**Informed Approach:** The Skills and Economic Intelligence Officer has been tracking available data: it is clear that there has been a greater impact on younger people in the workforce, and also in Local Authorities with greater levels of disadvantage. There is also greater impact in certain sectors, including manufacturing, food and accommodation services, and the wider service sector. The Skills Hub is sharing data with partners, and working with them to direct skills and employment provision to areas of need.

Significant work has been undertaken on the refresh of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework, with view to publishing a one year refresh for 2021, taking into account the unique environment resulting from COVID-19 and to enable the framework to be adapted in-line with the development of the LEP's Strategic Economic Framework.