

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

The Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub is the executive to the Lancashire 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.

Current Activity

The Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework 2021 has now been published on both the LEP (<https://lancashirelep.co.uk/key-initiatives/skills-employment/>) and the Skills Hub websites, following consultation with employers, providers and stakeholders in the autumn. Headlines regarding activity since the last LEP Board are provide below, by the strategic themes of the Framework.



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.

The Lancashire Careers Hub and Enterprise Adviser Network have continued to develop and share good practice across the network of 154 secondary schools and colleges. The pandemic has reduced the opportunity for young people to participate in employer encounters and workplace experience which has impacted on the Careers Hubs progress against targets. Virtual encounters and experiences are becoming more widely available, which will help to mitigate the risk, and progress will be made against Benchmark 5 (employer encounters). Benchmark 6 is more challenging as this is work experience and experiences of the work place.

| | Benchmark 5 (Average %) | | Benchmark 6 (Average %) | |
|---|----------------------------|----------|----------------------------|----------|
| | Target (July 2021) | Dec 2020 | Target (July 2021) | Dec 2020 |
| Careers Hub Wave 1 (Blackpool, Burnley, Pendle) | 80 | 66 | 70 | 45 |
| Careers Hub Wave 3 (Blackburn with Darwen and all other Lancashire areas) | 70 | 65 | 60 | 49 |
| Blackpool Opportunity Area | 75 | 73 | No target | 33 |

Following the success of START in Blackpool, funding was secured through the Blackpool Opportunity Area (twinning fund), CEC, Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership and Future U to further develop the platform and roll it out across the whole of the Lancashire area. START in Lancashire was launched in December. The interactive platform is organised by travel to work areas and priority sectors, and will provide access to a range of virtual encounters and experiences with employers and education providers.

During the autumn term, an additional 24 business leader volunteers, Enterprise Advisers were recruited. Vacancies have resulted from the growth in the network from 131 to 154 schools and colleges, as well as churn resulting from the pandemic. There still remains 21 EA vacancies (including 14 for Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) schools, who were new to the network in September 2020). A campaign is currently being run in tandem with the national Careers and Enterprise Company campaign 'Re-write the Story' <https://enterpriseadviser.careersandenterprise.co.uk/> to attract additional EAs. LEP Directors are asked to help raise the profile of the role with the business community.

Building on the success of the Blackpool Cornerstone Employer group, the Lancashire Cornerstone Employer group had its inaugural meeting in January, following a briefing in December. Cornerstone employers are ambassadors for the Careers Hub, and will work in partnership with the Careers Hub Leaders and ECs to drive the development of plans, activity and employer engagement across Lancashire. Twelve employers have confirmed their commitment: Pendleside Hospice, WEC Engineering, Conlon Construction, Wellbeing Lancashire, In Situ, John Lewis Partnership, United Utilities, Regenda Housing, Jacobs, Keepmoat, NHS, and DXC.

A SEND Community of Practice has been established, and had its first meeting in November with over 25 representatives from SEND schools, EAs, DWP and employers. The key objectives are to develop good practice and innovative practices to applying the Gatsby Benchmarks to the SEND setting.

The first phase of T Level recruitment took place in September across Digital, Education & Childcare and Construction T Levels in four Lancashire colleges. Although most Industry Placements had been planned to start in Spring, discussions are taking place with employers about movement of these placements into the second year. Providers generally have good relationships with prospective employers for placements within T level study programmes and do not envisage a shortfall in placement opportunities for the three T level subject areas. CPD and creation of T Level resources are now being progressed. There is a range of courses/support available from the Education and Training Foundation (ETF). Locally organised CPD will fill gaps, such as the Consultative Sales Training held recently for Industry Placement Co-ordinators.

The first stage bid for the Lancashire Institute of Technology (IoT) was submitted to DfE by the lead institution, Blackpool and The Fylde College.

The Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP) has been driving a number of activities with partners to engage young people in digital careers, these include:

Teen Tech Festival Lancashire with Maggie Philbin - online events progressed in mid-January with 6 Innovation Live workshops (11-18 year olds) and one City of Tomorrow workshop (for primary schools) covering topics such as: Game Design, Music, Space, Animation, Health and Future Technology. All sessions had segments from both national and local experts who set students tasks for completion prior to a feedback event. All the workshops have been re-broadcast during February half term, with a further feedback session planned for after half-term. 37 schools and 684 young people have engaged so far. A showcase event will take place online on Friday 26th February 2021.

Digital Careers Videos - a series of short films of local business people talking about their careers in a range of digital roles have been produced in collaboration with Brilliant Trees Media. These short films are in final stages of production and will be integrated into the Start in Lancashire platform. The films include female role models, with view to attracting more females to digital roles to address the Digital Skills Landscape research published last year, which showed that only one in six of the Lancashire digital workforce are female.

Cyber Girls First – the LDSP is working Cyber Girls First to bring one of their careers events to Blackpool in June targeting Year 8 girls. Cyber First Girls hope to follow up this online event in the future with a local face-to-face event and a university visit. DCMS are also very interested in the project and it is hoped that further events can be held across Lancashire.



Inclusive Workforce: supporting unemployed and inactive residents into sustainable employment, driving up digital skills and embedding social value to 'level up' areas of Lancashire and accelerate inclusive growth.

An application to the European Social Fund (ESF) National Reserve Fund under Investment Priority 1.1 to enable provision to be procured to support those unemployed as a result of COVID-19 with barriers to re-entering the labour market to receive additional employability support was successful. A new call worth £4.75m opened for applications on the 15th February 2021. The deadline for applications is the 12th April 2021: https://www.gov.uk/european-structural-investment-funds/active-inclusion-supporting-those-with-barriers-to-entering-the-labour-market-and-most-affected-by-covid-19-oc19s21p1809?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=a92a1ac5-54f1-47bf-bb9c-8754e472c554&utm_content=daily

The Adult and Employer Skills Forums have continued to meet regularly with positive attendance. The group review local labour market intelligence and consider priorities for provision, share good practice, and new project information to ensure that any new provision is integrated alongside existing provision. Procurement is underway by DWP for the 'Restart' programme under the Commercial Agreement for the provision of Employment and Health Related Services (CAEHRS) Framework, as part of the 'Plan for Jobs'. The Skills Hub has been working collaboratively with the DWP policy and commercial teams with responsibility for CAEHRS and Restart, and neighbouring LEPs and MCA (Cumbria, Cheshire and Warrington, and Liverpool City Region), who make up the Contract Package Area for the Northwest, to support the procurement process.

The Skills Hub has successfully worked in collaboration with the NHS, Lancashire Adult Learning, People Plus and referral organisations to support the NHS in recruiting clerical and administration staff for the Mass Vaccination Centres which opened across Lancashire in January. Due to the close working relationship with the members of the Lancashire Adult Skills Forum including DWP and the NHS it was possible to develop a pre-employment training course, filter suitable candidates, train and interview those who had successfully completed the training within the time requested. To date over 143 people have been interviewed and 121 have successfully been offered employment.

Over 900 Lancashire and Greater Manchester residents are engaged in the DCMS funded Fast Track Digital Workforce Fund programme and the DfE Digital Skills Bootcamp provision across the two areas. The approach has influenced skills policy and DfE are now rolling out the programme nationally, expanding from digital to digital and technical skills Bootcamps. In January 2021, the DfE released an ITT for a second wave piloting of Digital and Technical Skills Bootcamps. A number of bids covering the Lancashire area have been submitted against the 12th February deadline.

The Digital Freedom 50+ (Lancashire) project is administered by Selnet, in partnership with Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP) with funding from the Community Foundation for Lancashire. By working with Distribution Partners (community based organisations), the project will supply 320 digital devices and connectivity to digitally excluded over 50s across Lancashire.



Skilled & Productive Workforce: working with business to drive up skills in Lancashire's workforce to boost productivity, in-line with the needs of Lancashire's growth pillars.

A refreshed Apprenticeship Action Plan has been produced, this is the second iteration of the action plan and aligns with the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework and the Lancashire Technical Education Vision. A meeting is planned in March with key partners to agree the draft plan and collective actions. National Apprenticeship Week 2021 took place from Monday 8 to Sunday 14 February. The theme for this year's campaign was Build the Future: Train, Retain and Achieve. The Lancashire Skills Hub supported the campaign on their social media channels: Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook using the national hashtag #NAW2021, sharing stories of Apprentices and the benefits Apprentices have brought to their employers.

The LEP signed up to the Tech Talent Charter (TTC) to advocate greater gender diversity in Lancashire's digital workforce. Provision is in planning to support businesses with inclusion and diversity, covering the business case for inclusion and diversity and whole company buy-in, building an inclusive culture, and recruitment practices. In consideration of the lock down and feedback from local businesses, the working group decided to postpone the TTC training originally planned for January. A [register of interest page](#) has been opened for businesses and in March dates for training will be set.

The Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership, alongside its six fellow DSPs across the country, has teamed up with Google Digital Garage to deliver a series of weekly sessions from the 3rd March providing practical digital advice for small businesses, charities and individuals. Those interested in attending can register through Eventbrite at <https://digitalskillspartnerships.eventbrite.co.uk>.

The Lancashire Redundancy Task Force continues to provide support to businesses planning and making redundancies, with, at present, a particular focus on redundancies in the retail sector.



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.

The final guidance for producing a Local Skills Report was issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in November, to be completed by the end of this financial year. There is a significant amount of cross over between the contents of the published Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework 2021 and the Local Skills Report, and so the Skills Hub and the Skills Advisory Panel Team in the DfE are discussing a pragmatic way forward which brings the two documents together into one. This would not change the substance of the Framework but add elements to it, such as an annex which presents case studies evidencing good practise.

The Skills Hub have continued to deliver regular Lancashire Response Webinars to stakeholders. Four took place up to Christmas with the fifth taking place on 17 March. The webinars:

- Inform people of the Skills Hub and partner's response to date on the impact of COVID-19 on skills and employment, engaging partners with key initiatives
- Provide updates on policy and guidance
- Provide local data on COVID-19 impact to support partner's decision making regarding priorities
- Coordinate locally and work together to the benefit of local businesses and residents
- Enable partners, including DWP and providers, to give updates

The webinars are complemented by a partner data pack, which is an online interactive data dashboard, which builds on the provision of the LMI Toolkit. Stakeholders can interact with the data displayed in the dashboard and drill down to data specific to their geographic area and compare to Lancashire, the North West, and nationally. First published in mid-December it will be updated six times a year, and is circulated to around 150 stakeholders: <http://www.lancashireskillshub.co.uk/our-people/evidence-base>

The Skills for Work microsite was launched in July 2020, to enable Lancashire residents to access support if furloughed, facing redundancy, looking for work or 16-25. As of 16 Feb 2021 the website has received 14,600 views, including around 5,000 to the 16-24 page; and there were 2,500 external links clicked through to the support on partner sites. We have driven people to the site via Facebook activity and the pilot Skills Up Lancashire campaign which was targeted at 16-24 year olds.

Over the last 12 months the number of Lancashire Skills Pledge Members (businesses with at least one active pledge) has grown from 26 to 75 businesses. The second annual Lancashire Skills Pledge celebration took place on 15th December. Of the 75 Skills Pledge Members around half attended the event. Skills Pledge Members received a certificate and a locally sourced 'goody bag' through the post which the LEP chair, Steve Fogg virtually presented to them at the event. There was a lot of positive activity on social media, which will be built upon to reinvigorate the promotion of the Skills Pledge.