



LEP – Sub Committee

LEP - Skills and Employment Advisory Panel

Private and Confidential: No

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Careers Hub and Enterprise Adviser Network – update paper

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Executive Summary

The paper provides an update on progress regarding funding for the Lancashire Careers Hub and Enterprise Adviser Network (EAN), building on the paper presented to the May committee meeting.

The main grant from the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) has been accepted and the contract with the Skills Hub's delivery partner, Inspira has been extended. The Careers Hub and EAN are now at full coverage, with all Lancashire secondary schools, including special schools and Alternative Providers, and colleges signed up and engaged.

Both applications for research and evaluation projects to CEC have been successful and have now entered an incubation phase, with view to projects commencing in September/October 2021.

Further funds have been secured from the Blackpool Opportunity Area (OA) under the twinning funds, to support the sharing of good practice and learning from Blackpool to wider Lancashire and vice versa.

Recommendation

1. The Skills and Employment Advisory Panel are asked to note the contents of the paper and the funds secured to support Careers Hub and EAN activity across the LEP area.
2. A further update on progress and priorities for the coming academic year to be provided at the November meeting by Inspira.



Background and Advice

Lancashire Careers Hub and Enterprise Adviser Network (EAN)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 A paper was presented to the committee meeting in May 2021, outlining the grant offer from the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) to Lancashire for the coming academic year. The grant funding offer was approved as per the recommendation to the LEP Board and the contract extended with Lancashire's delivery partner, Inspira.
- 1.2 The final 2 Lancashire schools not previously engaged will be joining in September 2021, taking the Careers Hub and EAN to full coverage – all 156 state funded secondary schools, including special schools and Alternative Providers, and colleges across Lancashire. A campaign is underway to recruit further business volunteers, Enterprise Advisers to support the new schools and to address churn resulting from the pandemic. Committee members are asked to support and to make enquiries within their own business networks to encourage engagement, by encouraging employers to sign up to the Lancashire Skills Pledge - <https://www.lancashireskillshub.co.uk/lancashire-skills-pledge/>.
- 1.3 Whilst the Careers Hub and EAN has exceeded the CEC target for 2020/21 for average Gatsby Benchmark achievement, the academic year has proved challenging due to the impact of the pandemic and difficulties in enabling young people to engage in physical and virtual employer encounters and experiences, and those with further education, higher education and apprenticeships.
- 1.4 Progress against Benchmarks 5 & 6, employer encounters and experiences of the workplace have proved to be the most challenging, despite investment in virtual alternatives through for example, Learn Live employer encounters, the Start in Lancashire digital platform, TeenTech Festival and the partnership with Speakers for Schools. The impact of COVID-19 and associated timetabling difficulties has impacted on the ability of schools and colleges to plan for meaningful employer encounters and workplace encounters for all learners, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- 1.5 The focus for the coming academic year is COVID-19 recovery and career planning, with progression against Gatsby Benchmarks by school and college, rather than average benchmark achievement. There will also be a focus on ensuring that all young people, particularly those that are disadvantaged, are able to fully engage with careers provision in schools and colleges.
- 1.6 Kay Vaughan, Careers Hub Lead and Mark Bowman, CEO of Inspira will be invited to the November meeting of the committee, to provide an update on progress to date and further detail regarding priorities for the academic year.

2.0 CEC Research and Evaluation Projects



- 2.1 The paper presented to the committee meeting in May also referenced applications to the CEC for two research and evaluation projects. Both applications have been successful, with Lancashire being one of only two areas securing funds for both projects.
- 2.2 An incubation phase with the CEC is underway with view to launching the projects in the new academic year. This involves the development of a 'Theory of Change' model to support evaluation and a robust delivery plan.
- 2.3 As reported in the May paper, the first project is focused on testing approaches to supporting the effective transition of disadvantaged young people in Year 10 through to their post 16 destination in Year 12, to boost attainment, aspirations and reduce the risk of NEET (not in education, employment and training). The models to be tested involve support from trained engagement coaches (building on tests in the Blackpool Opportunity Area), extended work experience, and a combination of the two, with the project running for 2.5 years. The project will be steered by the Post 16 Officers Group, chaired by the Skills Hub, working collaboratively with Lancashire County Council and the two Unitary Authorities, the Lancashire Colleges, and the Lancashire Work Based Learning Forum, and will be reported on through the update papers from the Skills Hub to the committee. The evaluation will inform future strategy and policy regarding NEET prevention locally, and nationally through joint dissemination with CEC.
- 2.4 The second project aims to trial and test activities that boost the interest of females in digital careers in Year 8 and engagement in Computer Science at GCSE and STEM subjects more widely, as a first step towards a digital career – recognising that Lancashire has an ageing digital workforce, and that only one in six are female. The project will run for one year and evaluate different approaches to engaging young people through a range of career oriented digital programmes and activities. The project will be overseen by the Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership Steering Group and will be reported on through the update papers from the Skills Hub to the committee. The evaluation will inform our future strategy in Lancashire and the work of the Digital Skills Partnership, Careers Hub and STEM Learning, as well as feed into a national dissemination programme to inform future DfE careers policy.

3.0 Blackpool Opportunity Area Twinning Fund

- 3.1 As reported in the June paper, negotiations were underway with the Blackpool Opportunity Area and the DfE in relation to Twinning Funds to support good practice regarding careers provision across Blackpool and wider Lancashire. Funds will enable further development of the digital platform 'Start in Lancashire' and partnership engagement with business networks across the area. An estimate of £55k was provided in the paper, however funds have also been offered to support targeted careers activities with young people at risk of NEET and so the final figure is £117,000. The increased figure has been communicated to the LEP Board to seek approval to accept the grant, subject to review of the grant offer and associated terms and conditions by the Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer.



List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A