

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 is published on both the LEP (<https://lancashirelep.co.uk/key-initiatives/skills-employment/>) and the Skills Hub websites. 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, working collaboratively with employers. The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) have reduced the annual targets relating to employer encounters (Benchmark 5) and experiences of the workplace (Benchmark 6), reflecting the challenges of the pandemic. The work undertaken to enable virtual encounters and experiences has contributed significantly to performance, and more importantly, in boosting the aspirations of young people and breaking myths regarding labour market buoyancy.

	Benchmark 5 (Average %)		Benchmark 6 (Average %)	
	Target (July 2020)	March 2021	Target (July 2020)	March 2021
Careers Hub Wave 1 (Blackpool, Burnley, Pendle)	75	62.1	100% partial achievement	100
Careers Hub Wave 3 (Blackburn with Darwen and all other Lancashire areas)	65	65.3	100% partial achievement	85.1
Blackpool Opportunity Area	75	73.3	100% partial achievement	93

The 'bring a buddy' event aimed at recruiting additional business leader volunteers, Enterprise Advisers, resulted in 5 new appointments. The campaign is ongoing working closely with business networks across Lancashire and CiPD, promoting the Lancashire Skills Pledge, and pledges aligned with the Careers Hub.

A further Community of Practice has been established for Further Education (FE), working collaboratively with The Lancashire College (TLC) group and Careers Leaders, to support both progression in the colleges' benchmark scores, and discussions on how colleges can build on their current offer to schools thus potentially increasing schools' scores, particularly Benchmark 3 (destination tracking) and Benchmark 7. A virtual Careers Fair is also in planning to support post 18 choices and pathways.

The three top tier authorities, TLC and the Careers Hub are working together to support the transition of Year 11, taking into account the difficulties associated with the pandemic and the impact on young people's educational journey and health and well-being.

The Gatsby Foundation funded T Level Routes Ready project has now been running for three years through the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub. The following list details some of

the key achievements of the project, working in close partnership with Lancashire's FE colleges, businesses and strategic partners:

- Seven Routeway Networks and Industry Placement Network established
- Over 30 network meetings held
- Five additional projects supported, bringing an additional £200k+ into Lancashire
- T Level CPD developed for IAG professionals, with 78 attending the training
- Consultative Sales training delivered for college Business Relations staff
- Twelve Technical Education Newsletters designed and delivered to over 100 subscribers
- Over 2000 individuals and 650 businesses reached with awareness raising sessions about T Levels
- Industry Placements incorporated into the Lancashire Skills Pledge

The first stage bid for the Lancashire Institute of Technology (IoT), submitted to DfE by the lead institution, Blackpool and The Fylde College, has been successful and the Skills Hub is supporting a cross college and university team to develop the second stage bid.

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 – the Lancashire Festival, which took place in January and February reached over 850 young people. The most popular workshops included game design and animation. Highlights of the 2021 Festival can be seen here: [Lancashire Festival highlights](#) Following the de-briefing meeting, the project steering group are planning a second Festival in 2022.

Cyber Girls First – partnership working on the Blackpool event for female Year 8 students continues with schools, with the first event planned for the 16th of June. Pat Ryan (Founder) and colleagues from BITC have been instrumental in bringing together local and national employers to speak at the event including Chief Technology Officer at 10 Downing Street, an incognito speaker from The National Cyber Security Centre, Code Galaxy and Korber in Blackpool and JP Morgan.



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.

Following input through a national task and finish group regarding the remaining ESF National Reserve Fund, an action note has been issued enabling directly matched projects to submit project change requests to DWP for extensions in time and growth in funds to run projects through to 2023. Projects must be performing well.

The ESF programme commenced delivery in 2016, and up to the end of March 2021 the following participants have been recorded. Almost a third have progressed into a positive destination so far.

Adults Supported under Investment Priority 1.4 (Active inclusion) and 1.1 (Access to employment for job seekers and inactive people)	
Participants Engaged	20,717
Males	9,871
Females	7,884
Aged 50+	5,491
Ethnic Minority Group	3,120
Disability	6,760
Progression into a positive destination	6,781

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. The Forum supports the use of the on-line Escalate referral tool which now contains 144 opportunities and has been used by 4,377 users.

The Skills Hub has worked collaboratively with DWP, Liverpool Mayoral Combined Authority, Cumbria LEP and Cheshire and Warrington LEP to support the procurement of a prime contractor for the Restart programme for the Northwest Contract Package Area. The Northwest contract was awarded to G4S who the Skills Hub have an existing relationship with and who have a representative on the Adult Skills Forum. This contract will be delivered over a five-year period and is expected to deliver to approximately 108,000 people across the Northwest region. Partnership discussions are underway to integrate the offer locally.

The Skills Hub is working with CityFibre to support their local recruitment and skills needs. CityFibre is investing £4bn in full-fibre connectivity and has network rollouts underway aimed at connecting up to 8 million homes and businesses in 60+ towns and cities. To date conversations have been held with partners in Preston and the Blackpool area.

The extension funding received from DfE for Skills Bootcamps has funded 4 new bootcamps working with two new commercial bootcamp specialists and 2 existing Fast Track projects. These include: Code Nation, Northcoders, Tech Returners and IN4.0 Talent Academy. Content of the programmes focuses on software developer and cloud roles. The results of the national procurement process will be announced in August.



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, consulted on and approved by the Lancashire Skills and Employment Advisory Panel. This includes the development of the Lancashire Levy Transfer Network with the Lancashire Work Based Learning Forum, UCLan and key employers, which will benefit SMEs and providers across Lancashire.

The LEP is a signatory of the Tech Talent Charter, as an advocate for diversity in the digital workforce. In February, a thought-piece, jointly authored by Adrian Wright (UCLan), Kerry Harrison (Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership) and May Ellis (Lancashire County Council), was published to raise awareness of the issues and the training available to businesses. [You can read the article here.](#) To further the local conversation a series of lunch-time chats were hosted by Fraser House with a range of local businesses and GCHQ on the issue of diversity and inclusion.

Following on from the successful request for additional National Reserve Funding under Investment Priority 2.1, a call took place early in 2020. Four projects were successfully procured by DWP, the Managing Authority and details are provided in the table below:

Project	Lead Accountable Body	ESIF Funding	Overview
Building Successful Futures	PHX Training Limited	£1,528,000	Targeting Retail, Customer Service, Hospitality, Warehousing and Business, the project aims to develop the skills and career prospects of employed people, particularly within SMEs and micro businesses. The

			project will support employees to progress from entry level jobs, through the delivery of flexible and responsive vocational provision which meets employers' needs.
LEAP	UCLan	£2,259,000	Aligned with the Apprenticeship Action Plan the project aims to provide L3 bridging programmes, an Apprenticeship Mentoring Programme for supervisors, CPD for Apprenticeship Ambassadors and support the evolving Lancashire Levy Transfer Network (LLTN).
Upskilling Health & Social Care	Blackburn with Darwen Council for Voluntary Service	£2,134,000	Partners will engage with VCFSE organisations, who are part of the Lancashire Integrated Care System and undertake organisational diagnostics and skills audits to create workforce development plans and individual learning plans. Bespoke training will be developed and delivered, with pathways created that will lead to and complement other provision, supporting individual career paths and the upskilling of organisation's workforce.
Building Blocks-Business Health Matters	Active Lancashire	£5,191,000	The project aims to boost the health of Lancashire's SME workforce by delivering Level 2 and Level 3 Workplace Health Champion training and other qualifications such as Mental Health First Aid. The project aims to train 5000 Workplace Health Champions across Lancashire, who will act as advocates for Workplace Health and Wellbeing within their organisation.

Under the 2.2 call, The Lancashire Colleges (TLC) have been successful in gaining a contract to deliver a project to support Technical Education, working with employers (small to medium enterprises) to boost their capability and capacity to engage in Industrial Placements.

The Skills Hub continues to work with providers to ensure that employer facing provision meets the current and future needs of businesses. From the start of the ESF provision until the end of March 2021 the projects have engaged with 3,182 Businesses and delivered to 15,312 employees.

The Lancashire Redundancy Task Force continues to provide support to businesses planning and making redundancies.



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 Skills Hub worked closely with the Skills Advisory Panel Team in the DfE to agree a pragmatic approach to meeting the requirements of publishing a Local Skills Report while not diluting the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework. As a result, the two documents have been brought together and the Strategic Framework incorporating the Local Skills Report was published at the end of March, meeting the DfE's deadline, see here: <https://www.lancashireskillshub.co.uk/strategies/strategic-framework/>. It received

positive feedback from the department and was one of the first presented to the Skills and Productivity Board as an example of good practice.

The Evidence Base page on the Skills Hub website, which is open source, now includes an interactive data dashboard for partners, in addition to the LMI Toolkit. The page has received over 1,671 visits, from the start of the 2021 until 6th May 2021, compared to 254 views in the same period last year. Showing the value and impact of the new approach. The evidence base will continue to evolve in line with partners and stakeholder feedback, utilising the SAP grant. The Evidence Base page can be viewed here: <https://www.lancashireskillshub.co.uk/our-people/evidence-base/>

Throughout 2020/21, the Skills Pledge initiative has continued to gain traction and is well represented geographically across the LEP, with Pledge Partners from all districts within the LEP. As of the 31st of March 2021, there were 83 businesses actively pledging (an increase of over 45% from the previous year) to a total of 186 pledges (an increase of over 35% from the previous year). Lancashire's wide array of sectors continue to be well represented by Pledge Partners.

