

LEP - Skills and Employment Advisory Panel

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday, 1st September, 2022 at 8.30 am at the Teams Virtual Meeting - Teams

Present

Neil Shaw (Acting Chair)

Mark Allanson	Gareth Lindsay
Councillor Karen Buckley	Nicola Mortimer
Peter Caney	Kate Quinn
Dr Fazal Dad	Professor Wendy Robinson
Edwina Grant OBE	Bev Robinson

Observer

Paul Evans, Assistant Director, Area Lead BEIS
Stephen Jones, Head of FE Territorial Team, ESFA
David Gregson, Special Projects Manager, Research and Enterprise Services, Lancaster University
Helen Warren, Partnership Manager Lancashire, DWP

In Attendance

Dr Michele Lawty-Jones, Director of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub
Sara Gaskell, Strategic Partnerships Manager, Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub
Donna Sadler, Partnership Manager, Social Enterprise Lancashire Network (Selnet)
Joanna O'Donnell, Project Manager, Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub
Joseph Mount, Skills and Economic Intelligence Analyst, Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub
David Prince, Project Officer, Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub
Andy Walker, Acting Director - Growth, Environment and Planning, Lancashire County Council
Catherine Stott, Democratic Services Officer (Companies), Lancashire County Council

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that it would be Edwina Grant's last meeting, and gave thanks for her contribution to the panel.

Apologies were received from Alison Robinson, Liz Tapner, Neil Conlon, Ruth England, and Stephen Sykes. Neil Shaw chaired the meeting as Alison Robinson (chair) and Neil Conlon (vice chair) had given apologies.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 9th June 2022 and Matters Arising

Under Matters Arising, Dr Michele Lawty-Jones, Director of the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub, confirmed that the letter detailing the board's concerns around the transition from ESIF to USKPF had been delivered to the local authority chief executives, as agreed at the previous meeting.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th June 2022 are be confirmed as an accurate record.

4. Up-date from the Lancashire Skills & Employment Hub and partners

Dr Michele Lawty-Jones, Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub Director, provided an update from the Lancashire Skills & Employment Hub and partners, highlighting the following:

- In June, the Careers Hub held its first in-person annual conference since 2019, celebrating the success of the programme so far and outlining future priorities. The Chief Executive of the Careers and Enterprise company was particularly complimentary about the work in Lancashire. The conference included a Labour Market Intelligence input from Joseph Mount and the launch of new careers materials developed by a local design agency based on feedback from over 1,200 young people. Debbie Francis, chair of the LEP closed the conference with a panel debate with Lancashire's cornerstone employers, celebrating the success of the programme so far and future considerations.
- There has been an increase in the number of physical careers and employment encounters and experiences for young people in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks, with Lancashire performing in the top quartile nationally in terms of progression.
- Two Headteacher conferences are due to take place in October, focusing on provider access legislation to reinforce the aims of the Baker clause concerning post-16 technical education routes.

- Lancashire colleges have celebrated their first T-Level Graduates with Blackpool and Fylde College, receiving positive coverage on the BBC and across the Hub's social media channels.
- The Apprenticeships and Technical Education project has seen considerable success and the hub will continue to work with the Career and Enterprise company to expand activity in the coming academic year.
- Digital Advantage, the digital pop-up agency which engages teams of young people with industry coaches to develop Apps, has run several successful programmes in SEND schools across Lancashire, culminating in a gradation event at County Hall in July.
- All the local authorities have submitted their UKSPF investment plans, with ESF funded projects ceasing in 2023. Government feedback is expected to be received the autumn.
- The three top tier Local Authorities have received government feedback on their Multiply plans, with delivery planned for autumn. The Hub will be leading the development of a Lancashire wide Community of Practice.
- Escalate, the online referral tool, created to assist organisations in directing individuals into suitable employment programmes, is to be updated in line with the launch and finalising of projects. There has been an increase in the number of referrals to Restart through the system, translating into positive employment outcomes.
- There remains a significant number of health and social care vacancies across Lancashire. The Social Care Workforce forum was a positive start in sharing ideas and practice to address some of the key issues in the sector.
- The levelling up bid for the Eden Project North has now been submitted, with government feedback expected in the autumn.
- The Hub will be recruiting a new Skills and Employment Coordinator to support the social value work following the resignation of Martin Hill.
- The Lancashire Young Apprenticeship grant has launched, encouraging employers who have not previously employed an apprentice to do so in the manufacturing sector. Paul Hammond has joined as coordinator to help deliver the programme. The first grant has been awarded, with a high volume of interest from businesses.
- The Community Renewal Fund Project, Embrace Digital Lancashire, (helping businesses to choose the right software platforms to suit their needs) has delivered 80 training sessions to date, with more to be scheduled in future to meet demand.

- Joseph Mount is producing a report in relation to the Linked-in talent insight platform, articulating how the platform can support career provision.
- The Food and Agriculture Study presented by Amion Consulting at the previous meeting is being formatted by a design agency ready for publication on the Skills Hub website.
- The Hub's online interactive evidence base is being continually updated to serve as an information source for businesses and local authorities.
- The number of businesses signing up to the Lancashire Skills Pledge is increasing, with 363 active pledges to date. A celebration event is planned for December.
- The Skill-Up Campaign, providing skills development opportunities for 16–24-year-olds, has now been launched on the Hub's various social media platforms, and is scheduled to run for a month before receiving feedback.

Questions and comments were as follows:

Bev Robinson thanked the team for the report, requesting considerations around improving the presentation of progress within the overall report, such as including RAG ratings to make the data more accessible to outside audiences. Concerns were also raised around whether the impact of the engagement outlined in the update was being effectively monitored. The Chair noted the above suggestions and agreed that greater focus was needed measuring the overall impact of engagement.

Cllr Karen Buckley queried whether the 16-24 year-old age bracket for the Skill Up Campaign was a fixed bracket, and asked what provisions are available for life-long upskilling. Michele Lawty-Jones confirmed that the campaign did concern 16-24 year olds only, but reassured the board that alternative provision is available for other age-groups via the Skills for Work website: www.skillsforwork.info .

Fazal Dad asked how the successes highlighted in the report are communicated to the wider people and what indicators were in place to measure the quality of the engagement with individuals. Michele-Lawty Jones confirmed that any successes highlighted in the update are communicated primarily through the Hub's social media channels.

The Chair suggested that the board consider developing an annual report, providing an overview of the Hub's progress against its priorities, as a means of monitoring engagement impact.

Wendy Robinson suggested that parameters be introduced to allow for the measuring of Lancashire's performance against other counties. It was referenced that local labour market intelligence is benchmarked against England minus London data.

Resolved: The board acknowledged the update and agreed with suggestions made.

5. Lancashire Skills Bootcamps Update - 2022/23 Programme

Joanna O'Donnell, Project Manager, and David Prince, Project Officer at the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub, presented an update on the Lancashire Skills Bootcamps, highlighting the following:

- The Hub was awarded £1.25m to run Skills Bootcamps for residents and businesses. 13 applications were received from potential providers to run the Bootcamps, then shortlisted to 5 providers.
- The bootcamps are due to start in August / September and run for on average 12 weeks, with participants representing a wide demographic; including women, unemployed, over 50s, ex-offenders, and refugees.
- Following a review of the Skills Bootcamps by Amion consulting, it was recommended that a 'Community of Practice' (CoP) be introduced, encouraging providers to share knowledge and best practice as to coordinating bootcamp delivery. Meetings took place in July and August, with another CoP meeting scheduled for October.
- Each bootcamp provider is required to demonstrate what social value activities they were going to participate in throughout the programme. Further details on this can be found in the pack.
- Each provider is required to map the potential risks associated with delivery and equally, outline possible mitigations in order to maximise performance. Further details on this can be found in the pack.

The Hub's priorities for the coming months include:

- Developing the current marketing strategy for the Skills Bootcamps to expand interest and stakeholder relationships
- Developing an evaluation strategy to measure the impact of the Skills Bootcamps
- The Hub will have its first meeting with the DfE in September to discuss the performance against the Skills Bootcamps grant funding agreement to-date.
- Notification of 2023-2024 funding for Skills Bootcamps is expected in later in the year.

Questions and comments were as follows:

Bev Robinson raised concerns that graduates were disproportionately represented in the Skills Bootcamps at the expense of other groups in need of

upskilling. Joanna acknowledged the above and advised that she will consider ways to ensure a more equal distribution of recruitment as part of the risk and mitigations framework, as well as include specific data on the groups represented in the Skills Bootcamps as part of the next quarterly report.

Nicola Mortimer added that providers are incentivised to select graduates for financial reasons, as there is greater certainty that graduates will be able to complete the programme relative to other groups, and therefore further government funding will be received. It was noted that the Milliamp Technologies group in Lancaster group work with guideline limits on participants from each demographic to try and ensure even representation.

Fazal Dad, acknowledging the financial challenges faced by providers, stressed that the role of skills providers is to focus on upskilling individuals most in need, not those that are potentially over-qualified to receive training.

Michele Lawty-Jones suggested that the above concerns should be considered in the evaluation of the Bootcamps.

Resolved: The board acknowledged the presentation and noted the suggestions raised.

6. Exploring Economic Inactivity in Lancashire

Joseph Mount, Skills and Economic Intelligence Analyst at the Lancashire Skills Hub gave a presentation on economic inactivity in Lancashire, highlighting the following:

- Employment levels have dropped across Lancashire as a result of COVID-19, from 76.2% in March 2020, to a 71.5% employment rate in March 2022, 3% below the national average. The drop in employment can be attributed partly to Lancashire's aging population, with many leaving the labour market due to retirement.
- Although unemployment has increased, it has not increased by the same magnitude as employment has decreased.
- There has been a decrease in the number of economically active people (those in the job market or actively searching for work) in Lancashire since the pandemic, standing at 705,000 in March 2020, and falling to 667,00 in March 2022. While this is a national trend, the impact of the pandemic on economic inactivity has been more acute in Lancashire relative to other counties.
- Marginally more of those who are economically inactive now want a job compared to those pre-pandemic.
- Economic inactivity is highest in Fylde, Pendle, Preston, Blackburn and Darwen. Lancaster and Ribble Valley have seen decreases in economic inactivity, while the other districts are seeing increases.

- Women are more likely to be economically inactive than men and this gap is widening, from 9% in March 2020 to 11.6% March 2022
- Inactivity rates are highest amongst 16–24-year-olds.
- The primary reason for economic inactivity is long-term sickness, followed by caring responsibilities, and retirement.
- The start of the pandemic in March 2020 saw a spike in the number of people who had a requirement to search for work and were claiming universal credit. The percentage of people on Universal Credit with no requirement to search for work (for example, due to illness) has increased from 27% in March 2020 to 33% in March 2022. This is a national trend.
- An evaluation of data on Personal Independence Payments claimants suggests a link between those claiming PIP and economic inactivity, with an increase in claims associated with psychiatric disorders, particularly in the younger workforce.

Questions and comments were as follows:

The Chair thanked Joe for the presentation and expressed his appreciation for the depth of the study.

Mark Allanson raised that part of the reason for 16–24-year-olds presenting as the most economically inactive is down to many being students and queried whether the percentage of students within that age groups had increased or decreased. Joseph explained that, due to limitations on the data, he couldn't give a decisive answer.

Helen Warren from the DWP, provided a brief overview of the work that the body is doing to assist customers impacted by health issues, including launching a pilot in Lancashire to provide tailored one to one support.

Michele Lawty-Jones raised concerns regarding the increase in economic inactivity amongst younger age groups due to health issues, stressing that the board should continue to work with the health sector to address this. Particularly in wake of the uncertainty presented by the ESF to UKSPF transition.

The Chair thanked members for their contributions and noted that issues around economic inactivity should be given greater consideration by the board.

Resolved: The board noted the presentations and the subsequent comments.

7. Lancashire 2050 Update

The Chair provided an update on the Lancashire 2050 strategy, highlighting the following:

- The draft report is a suggested summary of what key themes and issues should feature under employment and skills in the Lancashire 2050 strategy, informed by the existing Lancashire Skills and Employment Framework, and discussions with local authority leaders and chief executives.
- The report aims to articulate how Lancashire 2050 will impact the employment and skills outcomes for residents. The Chair encouraged the board's feedback on whether it felt these were the right sort of priorities.
- The strategy centres around a series of priorities to focus delivery. These priorities have been shaped in consideration of the potential for a Lancashire Devolution deal.
- There will be future opportunity for board members to provide their feedback on plan in upcoming workshops, with dates to be sent out following the meeting.

Cllr Karen Buckley added the following:

- The report needs to be clearer on which age group the strategy aims to address.
- The impacts of the strategy will be cross cutting, extending beyond employment.
- The report's language needs to be accessible for all audiences, avoiding jargon.
- The strategy should focus on boosting resilience amongst young people.

Questions and comments were as follows:

Bev Robinson thanked members for their work on the report and stressed the need to align skills delivery and the curriculum with the future needs of the economy and the resources available, as opposed to what students would 'like' to study. Further clarity around how the impact of the strategy would be measured was requested.

Fazal Dad seconded concerns raised above and stressed the need for greater emphasis on the LEP's digital strategy within the report, considering the increasing importance of digital skills.

Mark Allanson suggested that an attributes framework for the future workforce be included alongside the skills outlined. Bev Robinson seconded this suggestion.

The Chair acknowledged the comments, reiterating that the planned workshops will allow for further amendments. Michele Lawty-Jones confirmed the report will be sent to a workshop with council leaders and chief executives at the end of September, with dates to be distributed following the meeting.

Resolved: The board acknowledged the report and the comments raised.

8. Reporting to the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Board

Resolved: It was agreed that the points raised around economic inactivity, the Skills Bootcamps update, and the initial feedback on the Lancashire 2050 report should be reported to the board.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 8th December at 8:30am. The meeting will take place via Teams.

An informal meeting is also scheduled for Thursday 10th November 9.30-12.30pm. The meeting will be in-person, location to be confirmed.

Potential dates for an informal workshop in September allowing for feedback on the Lancashire 2050 Strategy will be distributed to the board following the meeting.