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Report to: Employment and Skills Panel

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Subject: Cross-Cutting Themes:
More and Better Apprenticeships and Raising the Bar on High Level Skills

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Panel on work to progress the priorities and actions in the cross-cutting themes in the Employment and Skills Plan: “More and Better Apprenticeships” and “Raising the Bar on High Level Skills”.

2 Apprenticeship Hub Programme

- 2.1 The Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) European Social Fund contract for an Apprenticeship Hub programme is being delivered by Interserve through their Absolute Apprenticeships programme. The inaugural meeting of a programme steering group was held on 21 July 2017. Unfortunately, Interserve were still unable to provide any performance data for any of the three ESF contracts they hold.

3 Apprenticeship Grant for Employers

- 3.1 The Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE) is now closed to new registrations.
- 3.2 **Phase One** (Apprentice Starts 1 August to 31 December 2015 – financial year 2015/16) saw 1124 business receive grants totalling £2,276,000.
- 3.3 **Phase Two & Three** (Apprentice Starts 1 January to 31 December 2016 – financial year 2016/17) saw 1598 businesses receiving 1819 grants totalling £3,066,800.00. Appendix 1 provides further performance data for financial year 2016/17 programme outcomes.
- 3.4 **Phase Four progress** (Apprentice Starts 1 January to 31 July 2017 – financial year 2017/18)

Registrations for phase 4 closed on 4 August 2017. Over 1100 registrations have been received for Phase 4 and are currently undergoing initial eligibility checks. Checking and processing of payments will continue to March 2018.

- 3.5 To date:

- 3,117 grants have been awarded to 2,722 SMEs to a value of £5,342,800;

- 2,588 (95%) of the businesses receiving the grant had 50 or less employees;
- 1,114 grants have been awarded to business meeting the core criteria;
- 2,003 grants awarded including the 'top up';
- For 1,970 (72.5%) businesses receiving the grant, it was their first apprentice;
- Grants have been awarded in relation to 2,135 (68%) 16 to 18 year olds and 982 (32%) 19 to 24 year olds.

Appendix 1 provides further data relating to Phases 1 to 3 of the AGE programme.

4 LEP Apprenticeships Marketing activity

- 4.1 A marketing/awareness campaign on Apprenticeships ran over the summer, mainly via social media.
- 4.2 The campaign, #Letstalkrealtraining, was supported by a telemarketing campaign which contacted businesses (SMEs) who have already received some LEP support, such as grants, but have not received any information on apprenticeships. 104 appointments were made for members of the Skills Service to visit companies to advise them on support available in relation to workforce development including how to make the most of apprenticeships. From the 104 appointments, referrals have been made to a variety of LEP and partner services including further apprenticeship support. As part of the meeting, businesses were asked what the barriers were to offering apprenticeships. These comments will be used to inform future support to SMEs.
- 4.3 We hope to run a similar telemarketing campaign during the autumn targeting businesses who have never offered apprenticeships before but initially supporting Levy companies. Following on from discussions at the June Employment and Skills Panel and additional informal feedback, we know that many Levy companies still have no plans to utilise their Levy contribution or need support in planning usage and identifying potential providers.
- 4.4 The initial telemarketing activity was supported by funding from the ESFA.

5 Apprenticeship Promotion in Schools

- 5.1 Activity to promote apprenticeships in schools through the Enterprise in Schools programme has built up momentum during the summer term. All Enterprise Co-ordinators (ECs) receive regular updates, briefings and prompts on apprenticeship activity to pass on to their schools. School reviews, currently taking place, will identify schools' engagement with apprenticeships and future support and action plans needed ready for the new term.
- 5.2 A brief survey is being carried out with parents and guardians to establish how they currently find out about apprenticeships, what information would be useful and how they would like to access the information in future. This information will help

influence the design of the careers campaign (see item 8 – Great Education Connected to Businesses).

- 5.3 Local Authorities and training providers will intensify their activity to promote apprenticeships around exam results days in August. The Enterprise Coordinators will provide advice to schools with suggested activities and guidance for results days. The Realtime electronic facility at bus stops across West Yorkshire will be used to promote apprenticeships during the two week exam result period.
- 5.4 The EC with responsibility for apprenticeships in schools recently attended the Y & H Apprenticeship Ambassador Network to explain his work and to discuss how he can support the network and vice versa.

6 Raising the Bar on High Level Skills

- 6.1 At a previous meeting, the Panel noted that a call for bids to develop Institutes of Technology was anticipated with £170m to be available nationally. The Panel had a preference for a single LCR bid with clear strategic fit with LEP priorities. It may be appropriate for the bid to include multiple partners. Colleges in Leeds City Region would be well placed to develop a collaborative bid as they had a strong history of close collaboration. The call for bids has been delayed and is now anticipated in Autumn 2017.
- 6.2 At the annual LCR Skills Network conference, a £3.5m European Social Funded project “Reach Higher” was launched. This project will be delivered by the West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges with the aim of widening participation in high level skills, particularly in skills shortage sectors and among under-represented groups. Activity will include support for work placements, internships and conversion programmes.
- 6.3 The partnership of Higher Education Institutions in West Yorkshire, Go Higher West Yorkshire, has submitted a bid to HEFCE’s Degree Apprenticeship Development Fund, in order to strengthen the Degree Apprenticeship offer in the region. The bid focused particularly on health, education and building services / engineering.
- 6.4 HEFCE has launched a call for proposals for its Catalyst Fund with a theme of “Closing the skills gap and supporting the Industrial Strategy through curriculum development”. The deadline for applications is 25 September 2017 and funding of up to £200,000 is available through the Fund. At least two Higher Education Institutions from Leeds City Region are interested in submitting applications and Go Higher West Yorkshire are also considering submitting a collaborate bid.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 The Panel is asked to note and comment on the progress of activity against the More and Better Apprenticeships and Raising the Bar on High Level Skills priorities.