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**Report to:** Panel

**Date:** Date of meeting

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

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## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 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 Information**

### **Apprenticeships Overview**

- 2.1 Apprenticeship priorities and activities for 2018/19 have been identified as follows:
- Continue activity to engage the 80% of businesses across the Leeds City Region who have never offered apprenticeships before (see 2.2);
  - Continue to provide support to apprenticeship levy paying employers to plan the usage of their levy contribution, including the transfer of up to 10% of the annual value of levy funds from April 2018 (see 2.4);
  - Launch a new apprenticeship grant for employers (see 2.7);
  - Continue to raise awareness of apprenticeships within schools (see 3.9);
  - Continue to work with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to develop degree apprenticeship offer (see 2.19).

### **Marketing**

- 2.2 Subject to resourcing it is anticipated that marketing activity will continue to non-engaged businesses through intermediary partners & stakeholders and a potential further telemarketing campaign with face to face visits.

- 2.3 A final poster will be produced in the suite of #Letstalkrealtraining focused on promoting degree apprenticeships. This will be used in social media during National Apprenticeship Week 18 (5 – 9 March) #NAW2018.

#### Transfer of Levy Funds

- 2.4 From April 2018 levy-paying employers will be able to transfer up to 10% of the annual value of the funds entering their apprenticeship service account. They can transfer funds to any employer who is not part of their group, including smaller employers in their supply chain and apprenticeship training agencies. Employers will need to be aware of 'state aid' rules when receiving funds from other organisations.
- 2.5 Levy-paying employers who wish to transfer funds will have to agree the apprenticeships they are funding with the employer receiving funds. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) believe this approach will support both the transferring and receiving employers, as they can take a strategic view on how the funds will be used and focus on skills needs.
- 2.6 Employers receiving transferred funds will only be able to use the funding to pay for training and assessment for apprenticeship standards<sup>1</sup>; employers will not be able to use transferred funds to pay for training for apprenticeship frameworks. As the ESFA phase out frameworks, and move towards employer-led standards, this will support the ESFA agenda for high quality apprenticeships.

#### **Apprenticeship Grant for Employers - AGE**

- 2.7 The original devolved Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE) offered grants to employers for apprentices between 1 August 2015 and July 2017.
- 2.8 **Appendix 1** provides data on the achievements of the programme. In summary:
- 3,834 grants have been awarded to 2,924 SMEs to a value of £6,520,800;
  - For 2,204 (75%) businesses receiving the grant, it was their first apprentice;
  - Grants were awarded in relation to 2,633 (69%) 16 to 18 year olds and 1,201 (31%) 19 to 24 year olds.
- 2.9 An evaluation has been undertaken of the original programme and **Appendix 2** provides an Executive Summary.
- 2.10 Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and Department for Education (DfE) have given approval to utilise any unallocated funds from the original programme to support a further apprenticeship grant programme.

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<sup>1</sup> Apprenticeship Standards, developed by businesses, describe the job role that an apprentice will be doing and the skills required of them and are gradually replacing Apprenticeship Frameworks. Apprenticeship Framework, developed by sector bodies, are used to assess apprenticeships. Frameworks are primarily qualification-focused.

The new AGE programme, which has been developed in line with the views of Panel Members gathered at the December meeting, and has taken on board recommendations from the evaluation process, is attached in outline at **Appendix 3**. It is anticipated that the grant criteria and application process will be launched in summer 2018.

### **Apprenticeship Hub Programme**

- 2.11 The ESFA European Social Fund contract for an Apprenticeship Hub programme is being delivered by Interserve through their Absolute Apprenticeships programme. A meeting with the ESFA, the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Interserve was held in December to raise concerns and consider performance.
- 2.12 Due to underperformance and issues raised during the delivery period, the ESIF Sub-Committee has agreed not to continue with this programme and the contract will end in July 2018, subject to final sign off between the LEP and the ESFA
- 2.13 Officers therefore anticipate that there will be a gap in independent support to businesses and individuals from August 2018 due to delays with release of the bidding call (see 4.4 below). The Combined Authority is working with key partners and stakeholders to develop a bridging programme, as it is clear from feedback received that the current provision is not advancing the apprenticeship priorities of the City Region at a time of instability in the apprenticeship arena following government policy changes.
- 2.14 A new European Social Fund open call for this area of work is in development, approved by the ESF Sub-Committee but subject to final sign off by DWP as the Managing Authority. The expected call value will be approx. £4.5m. Bidders will need to provide a further £4.5m (50% match funding) over three years.

### **Apprenticeship Promotion in Schools**

- 2.15 One of the Combined Authority's Enterprise Co-ordinators continues to be the conduit for raising awareness of and arranging apprenticeship activities in schools alongside the wider team of Enterprise Co-ordinators.
- 2.16 This work also includes supporting understanding and implementing the new schools duty, from 2 January 2018, for maintained schools and academies to provide pupils in years 8-13 with access to providers of post-14, post-16 and post-18 education and training.
- 2.17 In relation to apprenticeships, the duty requires that schools have in place the following arrangements:
  - **At age 16**, pupils must be provided with opportunities to hear from apprenticeship providers, FE colleges, sixth form colleges and work based training providers; and

- **At age 18**, pupils must be provided with opportunities to hear from apprenticeship and HE providers.
- 2.18 A provider access policy statement sets out how schools manage access requests from potential providers. All maintained schools and academies are required to have one, and, from 2 January 2018, to publish their policy statement on their school website.

### **Raising the Bar on High Level Skills**

- 2.19 Go Higher West Yorkshire (the partnership of universities) is about to launch a campaign to promote their higher and degree apprenticeship offer. The campaign will be supported by a website for central information and contacts which will go live during National Apprenticeship Week 2018;  
<https://www.apprenticesgohigher.co.uk/>.
- 2.20 The Employment and Skills Team continues to work with HEIs through Go Higher to ensure gaps in provision, particularly at Higher and Degree Apprenticeship level, are being addressed and that provision is accessible by businesses and individuals.

## **3 Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

## **4 Legal Implications**

- 4.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

## **5 Staffing Implications**

- 5.1 The Combined Authority will be recruiting new staff to work on the AGE programme.

## **6 External Consultees**

- 6.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

## **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.

## **8 Background Documents**

None.

## **9 Appendices**

**Appendix 1** – AGE Whole Programme Summary  
**Appendix 2** – AGE Evaluation Executive Summary  
**Appendix 3** – New AGE Criteria