
Report to: Employment and Skills Panel

Date: 12 September 2019

Subject: **Employment and Skills Programmes**

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1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Panel on the progress of delivery of LEP-led employment and skills programmes in the Leeds City Region.

2 Information

Delivery Agreements

- 2.1 The first formal reviews of **Delivery Agreements** with the seven West Yorkshire Colleges took place in autumn/winter 2018. A report was published on 6 June highlighting the outcomes of the reviews and current position statement for each college <https://www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/media/2350/delivery-agreements-2019.pdf>.
- 2.2 Following the publication of this report, Cllr Hinchcliffe hosted a roundtable discussion with the colleges to look at next steps and actions. Key discussion points from the meeting were as follows:
- Apprenticeship funding allocation for delivery to non-levy companies has not been increased to reflect demand and colleges (and other providers) will not be able to realise any apprenticeship growth this year. Some colleges are starting apprentices at risk despite having been notified by the ESFA that there is no prospect of growth funding (see also 2.15 onwards)
 - Funding for further education has decreased year on year/not kept up with inflation. There is a national campaign to raise awareness of this issue
 - Colleges are struggling to attract and retain specialist tutors in priority sector areas
 - Although there was a good level of understanding of the FutureGoals careers campaign for young people, there was an opportunity for the LEP to engage

more with colleges to ensure that adults are supported to understand the careers opportunities in Leeds City Region

- Colleges would be supportive of a collaborative approach to engaging businesses, particularly around promotion of the Industrial Placements required for the new T Level qualifications.

2.3 An action plan has been put in place to address some of the issues.

2.4 The next round for formal reviews will take place late 2019 following release of the ESFA data cube.

School Partnerships

2.5 The **Enterprise Adviser Network** and the Combined Authority's Enterprise Coordinators are currently engaged with 182 (90%) of secondary schools and colleges. From April 2019 to June 2019 the network has delivered over 30,975 employer encounters and 3,795 employer encounters for pupil premium learners, 2,860 of whom have had at least two employer encounters as part of the network.

2.6 A call for applications to the **Raising Aspirations pilot** closed on the 21st June 2019 with 36 applications received from 34 schools and 2 colleges. 16 projects were awarded through the pilot pending the return of grant offer letters from the successful applicants. The awarded projects will benefit a combined total of over 6500 disadvantaged pupils within the city region. All projects aim to raise the aspirations of the pupils through a variety of innovative methods with employers encounters embedded throughout. Successful projects have been awarded in the following areas:

Bradford: 2

Calderdale: 4

Kirklees: 4

Leeds: 5

Wakefield: 1

York: 1

2.7 The **Kirklees Careers Hub** is making good progress in supporting its 35 member schools and colleges to work towards the Gatsby benchmarks for good careers guidance. The average number of benchmarks achieved by the 35 hub institutions is 3.5, against a national careers hub average of 3.2 and a national average of non-hub schools of 2.5.

2.8 The Careers Hub piloted a Key Stage 3 parental engagement event in North Kirklees, in an area where parental engagement is particularly low. This event was aimed as an introduction to careers opportunities and pathways to support future decision making and was unusual as careers events usually target the parents of older children. Over 100 people attended with 88% of parents reporting that they had more information about their child's careers and education options as a result of the event. The remaining 12% of parents already rated their knowledge at the strongest level before the event.

- 2.9 As previously reported, the Combined Authority was successful in its application to the Careers and Enterprise Company for a **Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Careers Hub**. This is a pan-regional Hub covering schools in Leeds, Wakefield, Calderdale and York which is due to commence delivery in September 2019.

Careers

- 2.10 During May and June the **FutureGoals** careers campaign futuregoals.co.uk reached over 12,000 young people, educators and parents/carers through social media and direct marketing. 80 teachers benefitted from employer-led CPD activities. From September, a marketing campaign will commence, targeting young people and their influencers, adults, those seeking apprenticeship opportunities and those looking for inspiration to change their career.
- 2.11 From October 2019 the **FutureGoals** careers campaign and website will become an all-age careers inspiration platform enabling individuals from across the Leeds City Region to access high quality Labour Market Information. The all-age platform will feature new and updated content including educator curriculum resources to help teachers meet Gatsby Benchmarks for good careers guidance and information to inspire adults to make better, more informed careers choices.
- 2.12 To support the roll out of the **Creative Industries Toolkit** sponsored by the Burberry Foundation, the LEP will partner a 'Creative Zone' at Skills Yorkshire in October. Skills Yorkshire is the region's largest skills show with up to 5,000 young people, parents and teachers attending each year. The Creative Zone will enable businesses from the region to exhibit at the interactive show to inspire the next generation of talent and educate them about careers in the creative industries sector.
- 2.13 The **[re]boot** programme, part-funded through European Social Funds (ESF), will commence delivery in September, with the West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges now procured as a subcontractor alongside Leeds Trinity University as delivery partner. Provision will be focused on the following sectors; Digital and Creative, Engineering and Manufacturing, and Construction and Infrastructure. [re]boot will offer individuals over the age of 18 the chance to upskill, gain new skills/qualifications and enter employment within shortage sectors. The programme will particularly target potential career changers and unemployed and under-employed graduates in the region.
- 2.14 The first courses to commence will focus on Digital and Production Skills. Businesses from across the region have the opportunity to engage with the West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges and Leeds Trinity University to co-develop and influence course content to ensure that training addresses skills gaps and meets business needs.

Apprenticeships and Employment

- 2.15 The LEP/Combined Authority has been contacted by a number of providers who have reported that they are turning away non-levy paying businesses and potential learners because of a **lack of non-levy funding for apprenticeships**. This issue was raised at the LEP Board July meeting and Ben Still, Managing Director of the Combined Authority was charged with finding solutions for the immediate and possible longer term impact as this issue could have a negative impact on our economic and productivity priorities and ambitions.
- 2.16 A survey of providers has been carried out to gather more information. The majority of respondents have confirmed that they are also in this situation. However, a minority of respondents indicated that they still have around 20% of their apprenticeship allocation available. In order to understand this issue more fully, officers will continue to engage with providers and intermediary organisations (including AELP – the umbrella organisation for independent training providers – and the Association of Colleges) to investigate further.
- 2.17 Further to the discussion at the LEP Board, the following approach is underway:
- Focus on supporting levy transfer. Levy-paying employers can transfer up to 25% of their levy to support apprenticeships in smaller businesses. There is opportunity to do more to encourage this approach by:
 - Targeting levy-paying employers: ideally HMRC would provide the information that they hold about which levy payers have unspent funds. Alternatively, large companies could be approached directly, prioritising those that the LEP/CA is already engaging with/supporting. Levy transfer could also be built in to Inclusive Growth grant conditions;
 - On a pilot basis, provide a brokerage service between levy-paying employers and training providers for the purposes of levy transfer. The AGE scheme would continue to run alongside to provide an incentive for SME take-up of apprentices.
 - Evaluate and roll out this approach further if it proves successful.
 - Lobby government to address the funding gap, commencing by making contact with appropriate policy teams. The Future-Ready Skills Commission provides an opportunity to lobby on this agenda.
- 2.18 At the May meeting of the Employment and Skills Panel, the Panel was alerted to the low level of uptake for **Apprenticeships Grant for Employers (AGE)** since its re-launch in February 2019. The criteria for the revised AGE grant extended the offer to businesses with up to 249 employees across all sectors. The maximum grant amount was increased to £2,500 from £2,000 as recommended by the Employment and Skills Panel in November 2018.
- 2.19 However, since February, only seven applications have been received (12 in total since August 2018). The national funding issue summarised above is

likely to be a contributing factor – as AGE is a top-up to this mainstream funding.

2.20 A broad range of marketing activity has taken place to promote the AGE grant, making use of a wide range of channels to reach SMEs, including those who are unlikely to have engaged with the LEP previously. The marketing approach for AGE has been the most intensive of all LEP products and has included:

- Press releases/articles utilising various local newspapers, business websites and
- business related newsletters
- Attendance by AGE team at a variety of business facing events
- Briefing of LEP and stakeholder business engagement staff
- Big screen adverts in Leeds and Bradford
- Three geographical and sectoral targeted LinkedIn advertising which has facilitated
 - 1,236 engagements
 - 95,188 impressions
 - 770 clicks
 - 165 likes
 - 69 leads

2.21 The main recruitment/start time for Apprentices is September/October. It is therefore possible that there is a pipeline of grant applicants waiting for their first apprentice to start before submitting a grant application, and we need to accommodate this in planning for utilisation of the funds. The current plan is for the application process to be turned off at the end of November, which provides adequate time to process the grant claims in the current financial year.

2.22 The **LCR Employment Hub** programme, launched in January 2019, is being delivered in partnership with Local Authorities and will support over 6,000 young people aged 15-24 to access apprenticeships and employment. Following a 9 month delay in contracting with the Managing Agent, a number of the local Hubs have experienced difficulties recruiting suitably experienced/qualified staff. It is anticipated that the programme could be impacted by the funding issues facing providers (see 2.15 above) regarding engagement of non-levy companies, particularly the aspiration to engage businesses who have never offered apprenticeships before.

2.23 Across the programme, performance is significantly behind profile, with only 33% of profiled participants supported so far. Performance review meetings took place in July, with plans being put in place at a local level to mitigate against underperformance.

2.24 **National Apprenticeships Week 2020** (NAW20) will take place from 3 to 7 February.

- 2.25 An action plan for the promotion of **apprenticeships in schools** is being developed for the new academic year. Performance against the plan will be reported to the ESP during 2019/20.

Social Prescribing Pilot

- 2.26 An evaluation of the **Work Wellness Service** project in York has now been completed and is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.27 The **Halifax Work Wellness** project has been established at Beechwood Medical Centre in a deprived area of Halifax, with delivery commencing in January 2019. Since the project's commencement in January 2019, 340 people have been supported, with 33 supported to return to work. Over the last quarter, there has been an increase in clients coming into the service at crisis point and requiring urgent mental health assessment. A significant number of clients are seeing the Work Wellness Adviser, and gaining access to a wide range of services, resulting in a reduction in GP and medical appointments.

Skills for Business

- 2.28 An “**agile squad**” of SME businesses and intermediaries were invited to review the LEP/CA's skills offer and messages to businesses. Key points from the discussion were:
- The skills offer to businesses was good and offered wide ranging support to businesses (see summary at appendix 2).
 - There are a number of channels to communicate with businesses that could be better accessed to raise awareness of offers including Chambers of Commerce, Make, Connect Gazelles
 - Avoiding jargon was encouraged to ensure a clear offer to businesses in written content, use case studies in social media to demonstrate local activity
 - There is a concern regarding how to grow the apprenticeship offer in the region. Some levy paying businesses are not clear on how to use their levy/unused levy and have inconsistent advice from providers; non-levy paying businesses are in some cases being turned away from providers due to a lack of funding
 - Businesses want one place to find out what support they can receive
- 2.29 As previously reported, the Combined Authority has submitted a bid for funding through a recent **ESF Skills for Growth** call which, if successful, will support businesses to engage with the full breadth of the education and training landscape. A decision is expected in autumn 2019. The proposed programme is currently progressing through the Combined Authority's assurance process.

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 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

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 delivery of employment and skills programmes in the Leeds City Region.

7.2 The Panel is asked to reflect on the impact and lessons from the Work Wellness pilot and refer to the LEP/Combined Authority's Inclusive Growth and Public Policy Panel to influence health commissioners

8 Background Documents

None.

9 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Work Wellness evaluation

Appendix 2 – summary of Leeds City Region skills offer