
Report to: Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership Board (LEP Board)

Date: 14 July 2020

Subject: **Employment and Skills Panel update**

Director: Brian Archer, Director of Economic Services

Author(s): Michelle Burton

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide the LEP Board with a report on the work of the Employment and Skills Panel, and update on devolution of Adult Education Budget (AEB) and the Employment and Skills plan refresh.

2. Information

- 2.1 The panel met on 19 June 2020

Employment and Skills Programmes:

- 2.2 The **Enterprise Adviser Network** and the Combined Authority's Schools Partnership team are engaged with 185 (92%) of secondary schools and colleges. Despite this good performance to date, the next quarter is going to be somewhat different in the light of COVID-19 as little traditional interaction can take place between schools and employers.
- 2.3 The team is focused on providing schools with much-needed careers support for young people at key transition points in their education. A series of **at-home learning careers resources** have been developed, aimed at students aged 11-18. These resources are accompanied by guidance to support teachers and parents to use them with young people and have been very much welcomed by the 180 schools and colleges in the Enterprise Adviser Network.
- 2.4 By the end of the financial year 2019/20, the **futuregoals** all-age careers campaign reached over 2 million adults, young people and educators. The website <https://futuregoals.co.uk/> now includes specific resources for different audiences.
- 2.5 The FutureGoals Spotlight learning resources <https://futuregoals.co.uk/spotlight/>, developed in partnership with Burberry,

have also been adapted to respond to the current remote working / home-schooling situation, by adapting all learning resources to be digital editable PDFs, alongside updated teacher guidance on how students can learn about the breadth of the creative industry in our region from home.

- 2.6 The Combined Authority's adult re-training programme, **[re]boot**, is part-funded through European Social Fund (ESF) and gives adults the chance to upskill, gain new skills/qualifications and improve their employment options. The programme is currently particularly targeting furloughed workers and graduates entering the workforce this summer and 18 new online courses have been launched.
- 2.7 There are some concerns about performance and we are working closely with the contractor to address this. To ensure we meet contractual targets and learner numbers a procurement process will take place to procure an additional sub-contractor.
- 2.8 The Apprenticeship **Levy Transfer Service** was launched on 1 November 2019. In recent months, levy payers have paused these discussions but many are now keen to resume this activity with a view to utilising unspent levy payments to support SME apprenticeships through the COVID-19 crisis. LEP Board members are asked to encourage their networks to engage with the team via <https://www.the-lep.com/business-support/skills-and-training/apprenticeship-levy-support/>
- 2.9 The £9m part-ESF funded **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. In April 2020, the Employment Hub was re-launched to respond to the COVID-19 crisis with a wider client group. The Employment Hub can support people to seek employment and apprenticeships (including furloughed or redundant workers) and can support businesses to recruit. Since the relaunch in April we have had 259 enquiries from individuals, mainly who are unemployed, and recruitment support requests from 19 businesses.
- 2.10 The Combined Authority has been successful in its bid for European Social Fund to deliver a **Skills for Growth** programme which will support businesses to engage with the full breadth of the education system, from primary schools to universities. The approval decision letter was received on the 30 March with allowance for alteration of the programme timeline due to the COVID-19 situation. The timeline is being altered to commence in September 2020 and complete August 2023. Staff have been recruited to the new team and will start in post in September.

Devolution of the Adult Education Budget

- 2.11 As previously reported, devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority is a central part of the West Yorkshire devolution deal. AEB is currently funded by the Department for Education

(DfE) and administered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in non-devolved areas. Devolution of AEB will ensure that the fund addresses the skills needs of individuals and employers in West Yorkshire. The principle purpose of the AEB is to provide adults with the skills needed for entering and sustaining work, an apprenticeship, or other further learning.

- 2.12 An application for implementation funding was submitted to DfE on 31 March 2020. At the time of writing this paper, a decision is awaited. To secure devolution of AEB, the Department for Education required that various Readiness Conditions need to be met, and evidence regarding these was submitted on 18 May. The submission included:
- a Draft AEB Strategy
 - assurances from the Combined Authority Managing Director that the organisation will be ready to take on responsibility for AEB functions from the academic year 2021/22
 - evidence outlining our current capability and development plan.
- 2.13 The Employment and Skills Panel has provided strategic input to support the development of the Draft AEB Strategy, providing feedback prior to its submission to the Department for Education (DfE), and has received updates on the progress towards meeting the 'Readiness Conditions'.
- 2.14 The Draft AEB Strategy sets out proposed priorities for funding in West Yorkshire, the impact we aim to achieve by taking on the devolved funding, expected provider behaviours and our suggested approach to commissioning the £63 million per annum that will be devolved to the Combined Authority.
- 2.15 Public Consultation on the Draft AEB Strategy was held between 25 May and 12 July 2020. Given the current Coronavirus situation, a communications plan was developed to promote the consultation to the widest possible audiences using a range of digital and non-digital channels. These included a combination of:
- Social media
 - Press releases targeting local and regional media
 - Direct engagement with skills providers
 - Direct e-shots to an extensive stakeholder list
- 2.16 Due to social distancing guidelines, face-to-face consultation channels were not possible. Digital consultation was conducted through an online survey conducted through YourVoice. To ensure a full range of engagement, virtual workshops were coordinated to hold focussed consultations with key providers and stakeholders, including Local Authorities, College Principals, and Independent Training Providers. Focus Groups were also held with Employers and Learners to understand their experience of AEB, and how we can improve the service received.
- 2.17 The Campaign Company were successful in tendering for the independent evaluation of the consultation activity. Their report will include analysis and

recommendations for change that will inform the final version of the AEB Strategy. Once revised, the AEB Strategy will be submitted to the Combined Authority for approval in September.

2.18 The key next steps for Adult Education Budget are:

- Awaiting a decision from DfE about the Combined Authority's application for implementation funding (Imminent)
- DfE approval to proceed based on the Readiness Submission (Imminent)
- AEB Strategy to be ratified by Combined Authority (September 2020)
- Development of procurement specification, funding rules and contracts prior to Commissioning (by September 2020)
- Commissioning for 2021/22 provision (October 2020 – March 2021)
- West Yorkshire allocation confirmed by DfE (March 2020)
- Delivery and management begins (1 August 2021)

2.19 Achieving readiness by 1 August 2021 is heavily contingent upon the projected timescales agreed with DfE being met. Key workstreams to deliver this include legal and procurement preparation (drafting a procurement strategy, funding rules, and contracts and agreements), consultation and policy work (to ensure that the approach is fully consulted on and that this consultation is accessible); and systems development (ensuring that the ICT, Finance and Data arrangements are in place to support contracting and payments).

Employment and Skills Plan

2.20 As previously reported, the lifespan of the current Employment and Skills Plan ends during this year, 2020. The current Employment and Skills plan; skilled people, better jobs <https://www.the-lep.com/research-and-publications/research-publications-archive/leeds-city-region-employment-and-skills-plan-2016-2020/> includes the following themes:

- Raising the Bar on High Level Skills
- More and Better Apprenticeships
- Great Education Connected to Business
- Employability, Accessing Jobs, and Realising Potential
- Building Workforce Skills and Attracting Talent

2.21 At their meeting in March 2020 the Employment and Skills Panel agreed to review the plan and at their last meeting undertook an assessment of the current priorities. This took into account the changes that have taken place since the last plan was written, including:

- Proposals from the Future-Ready Skills Commission
- Business Plan priorities from employment and skills programmes
- Economic Recovery / COVID-19 response
- Labour Market Intelligence

- Devolution Deal
- Adult Education Budget (AEB) strategy

2.22 The panel agreed the scope of the Employment and Skills Plan refresh and endorsed the engagement approach.

2.23 The next stage of the refresh will involve engaging with key stakeholders from across the education, training and employment landscape in West Yorkshire through a series of focus groups that will take place during June and July. This will be followed by a wider public engagement that will invite the views of broader range of stakeholders during August and September.

2.24 The sessions will be used to consult on the proposed vision, scope and key priorities for the refreshed Employment and Skills Plan and how these will contribute to the objectives of the Strategic Economic Framework and Economic Recovery Plan.

2.25 Next steps are as follows:

- Stage 1: Scoping and appraising current priorities (May – July 2020)
- Stage 2: Consultation with key stakeholders and partners, and open consultation (July – September 2020)
- Stage 3: Preparation and sign-off of the refreshed plan (October – December 2020)
- Stage 4: Publish and launch revised plan. (Early 2021)

3. Clean Growth Implications

3.1 There are no clean growth implications directly arising from this report.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

6. Staffing Implications

6.1 There are no implications associated with this paper.

7. External Consultees

7.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

8. Recommendations

8.1 That the report of the work of the Employment and Skills Panel be noted.

8.2 That the progress towards devolution of AEB is noted

8.3 That the work towards the refresh of the Employment and Skills plan refresh is noted.

9. Background Documents

9.1 None.

10. Appendices

10.1 None.