
Report to: Employment and Skills Panel

Date: 25 November 2020

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 and how they have been adapted to support COVID-19.

2 Information

Apprenticeships and Employment

- 2.1 COVID-19 has had a major impact on delivery and performance of the Leeds City Region **Employment Hub** programme. Despite an increase in enquiries from people facing redundancy or leaving education (the main target group for the programme) we still anticipate a major increase following the end of the furlough scheme. However, those individuals furthest from the labour market pre COVID-19 are requiring a lot of specialist support on a range of issues and are not ready to move onto their next steps of further learning or employment which is impacting on the progression of individuals on the programme. Business engagement to identify employment or apprenticeship opportunities has also been impacted. A reconciliation of achievements has been undertaken which reflects that achievements at the time of writing (October 2020) in year two of delivery include:
- Engaged 3438 15-24 year-old participants against a profile of 3565 (96%). Of these:
 - 1074 participants, against a profile of 420 (256%), were recorded as being from ethnic minorities
 - 734 participants declared they had disabilities against a target of 341 (215%)
 - 1093 participants are recorded as having no basic skills qualifications against a target of 786 (139%)

- Of the participants starting the programme 534 have been supported with finding education/ training, employment or self-employment against a target of 1339 (40%), with a majority being supported into training
- 2085 businesses engaged against a target of 3354 (62%).

As reported previously, part of the Combined Authority response to COVID-19 we repurposed the Employment Hub to provide a 'one stop shop' for job seekers of any age and employers recruiting or making redundancies. At the time of writing we had supported 476 individuals and 67 businesses, which were referred to our Employment Hub programme delivery partners for support. The number of individuals seeking support has started to increase, particularly around the 25-39 age range. We expect these figures to continue to rise as the furlough scheme comes to an end and support and progression will be dependent on the implementation/situation in relation to any additional lockdown measures.

- 2.2 Interest in the **Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Service** from pledging organisations continues to grow. We are currently in negotiation with over a dozen organisations seeking to pledge funds, which if agreed will move us towards our £3m target. Having made our first match with pledges from Portakabin, a new marketing campaign has been released to showcase the contribution to the economic recovery by pledging companies and the role apprenticeships can play in facilitating our skills and employment priorities. Levy transfers mean that apprenticeship training fees will be covered 100% by the transferring company. However, we have had limited interest as yet from businesses offering new apprenticeship opportunities or their training providers. This probably reflects the position that many businesses have taken to postpone taking on apprentices until spring 2021.

The Levy Transfer Services webpages provide access to the registration form for training providers to request support on behalf of businesses.

www.the-lep.com/business-support/skills-and-training/apprenticeship-levy-support/

- 2.3 In the Chancellors summer announcements which provided a programme of support for young people affected by COVID-19, the DWP **Kickstart** programme was announced offering up to £6,000 to businesses offering job opportunities and support from November 2020. The Combined Authority have worked with local authority partners over the summer to ascertain roles in supporting the programme. Most West Yorkshire local authorities will become 'Gateway' agents supporting businesses through the Kickstart process. The Combined Authority launched a marketing campaign in September to raise awareness of the offer with support to refer enquiries to the local Gateway.

School Partnerships

- 2.4 The **Enterprise Adviser Network** is operating virtually. The Enterprise Coordinators are completing action plans with schools and colleges to look at alternative ways to achieving career outcomes. Our first regional workshop is

scheduled for next month to help enable new strategies and sharing of good practice across the region.

- 2.5 In **Bradford Opportunity Area** the focus is on co-developing virtual encounters and work experience with the support of strategic employer partners (“Cornerstones”) and working with partners to support schools virtually. We are also embedding the offer across the region to widen the reach of current employers to access more schools and colleges.
- 2.6 Linked to the extension agreed, **Raising Aspirations** (Business Rates Pool funded) grants for schools, projects are on track and positive stories from schools coming through. The first videos produced by Joseph Norten will be embedded throughout school to inspire their pupils.
- 2.7 The **Kirklees Careers Hub** has delivered a number of events via virtual platforms and due to launch the new Parental Resources in November. The aim of these is to inform, educate and empower those that influence young people when at the crucial decision-making age for pathways beyond year 11. More information on this in the resources section below. **The Special Educational Needs and Disability Careers Hub** (SEND) have been working on the alumni resource with the University of Derby. The role out and training for schools and colleges starts next month.

Careers

- 2.8 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 particularly within key regional sectors, focused on construction, digital, manufacturing & engineering and the fast growing creative sector. Since its launch in November 2019, the programme has supported over 300 individuals to upskill.

To ensure all contractual targets are met we have appointed an additional independent training provider, Go Train who are new to the Leeds City Region. They will deliver additional training courses. This provision runs alongside current delivery and will commence in November 2020 accompanied by a marketing / awareness raising campaign to ensure the requisite number of learners are recruited.

Hands-on and practical training courses were suspended during the tight lockdown restrictions. Through risk assessments and the implementation of social distancing measures, some of these have resumed albeit with smaller learner numbers. A course to upskill mechanics in hybrid vehicle technology will be delivered socially distanced.

The programme will continue to market courses to those who have been made redundant through the pandemic. Additional marketing and awareness raising campaigns are planned and will be ramped up started in November to align with the demise of the employment support schemes.

The [re]boot career changers content continues to be the most viewed section on the FutureGoals website. In the last month, the [re]boot page received 1,361-page views and 1,064 unique page views.

- 2.9 Following the release of a DfE tender to bid for a **Digital Bootcamp pilot** (up to £4million to cover 3 geographical areas nationally) to deliver a series of adult digital and / or technical skills bootcamps across the Leeds City Region between November 2020 – March 2021 the Employment and Skills Team await the outcome of their application. Digital Bootcamps formed part of the Prime Ministers Lifetime Skills Guarantee announcements in September 2020.

Insights from this initiative will help inform the development of the £2.5b National Skills Fund and will also support in achieving the aims set out in our COVID-19 recovery plan.

The bootcamps will be employer-led training initiatives that test delivery models in a small, manageable way and will develop innovative adult training and re-training courses that link directly to local digital and technical skills needs.

Building on the success of attracting individuals to the [re]boot programme and supporting the local economy to address recovery after COVID-19 it is proposed that the Combined Authority would act as the lead partner.

The Bootcamp will support individuals from disadvantaged groups such as BAME, women and those unemployed due to COVID-19 or those looking to upskill. It would create an opportunity to develop innovative and responsive adult training that addresses the needs of unemployed adults and those who need additional skills to progress in their current employment.

Delivery of provision will be designed in collaboration with employers and will guarantee interviews and job outcomes for participants. Provision will not be bound by existing accreditation and will have the flexibility to meet needs of employers directly. Currently, under existing adult skills programmes training is restricted by Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) through ESF delivery and prevents employers, colleges and private training providers from developing courses that meet the needs of employers.

- 2.10 To support the transition of young people during the pandemic, a targeted marketing campaign to promote the [FutureGoals education and training](#) page to young people (at risk of becoming NEET), parents and stakeholders from August – October which resulted in 2,559 interactions with the website. Local authorities, partners and education providers have been actively sharing collateral on their own social media channels.

As part of the campaign the **FutureGoals** website has added an additional function which allows individuals to register their interest for additional careers support. Contact forms are shared with Local Authorities who are providing support to individuals through the ESF funded Employment Hub programme.

[FutureGoals Remote](#) launched between May and July in response to COVID-19. The resources are a series of brand new free interactive activities to help young people develop employability skills from home during the lockdown. Since the start of the academic year, the FutureGoals Remote webpage has continued have an acerated number of downloads and has had 2,314 visits since launch and 987 downloads of the resources.

- 2.11 A series of **virtual work experience** videos and resources are in development to support employers and education providers offer experiences of the workplace to students which have become increasingly difficult for schools to undertake. Work experience has never been so important, particularly for those students who don't have positive role models around to learn about and understand the world of work.

The virtual work experiences will include virtual tours within key sectors and a 2-way interaction with employers and young people.

The first of 5 videos/resources will be launched in November with a full launch of the resources in Careers Week in March 2021. They will be shared around the network of 180 schools and colleges and will be available on the FutureGoals website.

- 2.12 A series of new **parental engagement resources** have been developed to help support parents and carers to have constructive conversations with their children about their child's future career options.

As part of the Kirklees Careers Hub, the Parental Engagement; removing barriers to social mobility working group identified the need to support parents and carers to have greater awareness of the different education and career options available to their children, as well as improve parents and carers low confidence in engaging effectively with their children about their opportunities, choices and aspirations.

The resources will be available from November 2020 and will be launched across all 180 schools and colleges in the EAN network as well as a further targeted digital marketing campaign to reach parents directly. The Parental Engagement resources will be available on FutureGoals.co.uk

- 2.13 An insight lead review of the **FutureGoals website** is currently taking place with the aim to improve the sitemap and user journey, ensuring each of our key audiences can easily and simply access the relevant careers inspiration and support for them. This work will continue until the end of the year will include reviewing the FutureGoals website sitemap and infrastructure architecture.

Delivery Agreements

- 2.14 A **Delivery Agreement** report highlighting assessment and analysis of 2018/19 available data on our FE College performance in line with the agreed benchmarks in the original Delivery Agreements will be published early in 2021.

Skills for Business

2.15 The **Skills for Growth** programme, supporting businesses to engage with the full breadth of the education system, has recruited and trained a team of eight Business Partnership Advisers, a Team Leader and a Contracts Officer. The team started in September and are working closely with the local authorities' business facing teams to engage a wide range of businesses to connect with our education offer. Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY) are supporting links with universities and collating the business support available from HE. Reporting of business engagement will start in December following the Programme Inception Visit from DWP.

2.16 The Local Digital Skills Partnership Manager and Skills for Growth team are working with the West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges (WYCC) to engage businesses with local colleges to develop courses. The Let's Talk Real Skills Programme is piloting new courses aligned to business demand.

3. Clean Growth Implications

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

7. External Consultees

7.1 No external consultations have been undertaken.

8. Recommendations

8.1 The Panel is asked to note and comment on the progress of delivery of employment and skills programmes in the Leeds City Region.

9. Background Documents

None.

10. Appendices

None.