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

Date: 20 January 2021

Subject: **Employment and Skills Panel**

Director: Brian Archer, Director of Economic Services

Author: Catherine Lunn, Head of Employment and Skills

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide the LEP Board with a report on the work of the Employment and Skills Panel, including COVID-19 recovery activity, an update on devolution of Adult Education Budget (AEB), Employment and Skills plan refresh and national policy changes impacting on the skills system.

2. Information

- 2.1 The Panel met on 25 November 2020 and received reports, verbal updates and group discussions on a range of initiatives including preparation for devolution of AEB (para 2.2), successful negotiation of additional devolution funds as part of the new Lifetime Skills Guarantee (para 2.3), securing £1m Apprenticeship Levy Pledge from Santander (para 2.28) all which contribute to our strategic priorities, in particular, supporting the learning, development and employment aspirations of West Yorkshire Citizens.

Policy & Strategy (including devolution)

Devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB)

- 2.2 Next steps for £63m devolved Adult Education Budget:
- Governance arrangements were approved at the 27 November Combined Authority which includes regular reporting to the Employment and Skills Panel and the LEP Board.
 - Commissioning for 2021/22 provision (October 2020 – March 2021)
 - Stage one of the Dynamic Purchasing System closed on 27 November. Successful applicants will be invited to submit applications to stage 2.
 - Stage two will be announced in January.
 - West Yorkshire allocation confirmed by DfE (March 2021)
 - Delivery and management begins (1 August 2021)

- 2.3 The panel considered the new National Skills fund including the new Level 3 entitlement that will fund adult to achieve their first L3 'economically valuable' qualification, and bootcamps. The new entitlement will be delegated to MCAs to align provision with devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB). An initial list of qualifications has been published¹, with a mechanism for MCAs and LEPs to submit evidence where further qualifications might be proposed against DfE criteria. An analysis of take-up and need will be taken to the panel meeting for discussion.
- 2.4 The Panel discussed Wave 2 of Institutes of Technology (IoTs) as wave 2 applications for areas currently without an IoT were open until 14 December, with £12m available for capital funding for 8 new IoTs. The discussion considered a range of views and concerns particularly around how best to respond to the increasing technical skills at levels 4 and 5 as well as the timing. There was no application from Leeds City Region based institutions in this round, a third wave is expected, and it will be re-considered when announced. It was agreed that the Panel would hold further discussions on how best to meet the needs of technical education at levels 4 and 5 in the meantime.
- 2.5 The Panel agree to consider the skills report that will be published as part of Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) requirements in March and will be used to inform government about local skills needs.
- 2.6 The Panel will be holding a roundtable discussion jointly with BIG panel members on 21 January to discuss the priorities, aims and objectives of the revised Employment and Skills Plan, ahead of the final report being presented at the next LEP and ESP meetings in February.
- 2.7 The panel welcomed a discussion on options for the proposed Good Work Standard as part of the Inclusive Growth framework.
- 2.8 The Local Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP) Board held its inaugural meeting on 23 November, with regional and national representation, including C4, Produmax, Yorkshire Universities, STEM Learning, PwC, EY, NHSX and Be the Business, with a focus to set the scene re the importance of digital skills to the region and how it supports so many of the agendas across the Combined Authority.
- 2.9 The LDSP has engaged partnership delivery partners to support increased digital skills in the region, including:
- Amazon Small Business Accelerator program has launched in the region and West Yorkshire have become the biggest users of the platform nationally
 - Digital Boost has launched to provide mentoring platform for SME's, and again take up from WY businesses has been very positive.

¹ [National Skills Fund - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

- In partnership with Lloyds bank, we will also deliver a targeted program of digital business support starting in January aimed at supported BAME led businesses.
 - A program to be delivered by TeenTech to support young people from 8-19 years old will be delivered in Q2 of 2021.
- 2.10 The panel had an update on the green skills partnership roundtable held in November which brought together employers, training providers and industry experts who have agreed to collaborate in the Region to identify the skills needs and demands in tackling the climate emergency. The panel have nominated a Green Skills Champion.

Employment and Skills Programmes

School Partnerships

- 2.11 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.
- 2.12 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.
- 2.13 The **Kirklees Careers Hub** has delivered a number of events via virtual platforms and launched 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. **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 started in December.

Careers

- 2.14 Following the release of a DfE tender in September 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, it was announced in early December that our application had been successful, securing £1.3m. Digital Bootcamps, so branded by government, form part of the Prime Ministers Lifetime Skills Guarantee announcements in September 2020.
- 2.15 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. Provision will not be bound by existing accreditation and will have the flexibility to meet needs of employers directly.

- 2.16 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 will 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.
- 2.17 The Combined Authority's adult re-training programme, **[re]boot** 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, the programme has supported over 300 individuals to upskill.
- 2.18 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 is being delivered socially distanced.
- 2.19 The programme will continue to market courses to those who have been made redundant through the pandemic and will be enhanced to support all individuals at risk to reskill/upskills part of a new programme being supported by the Combined Authorities Single Investment Fund (SIF) in response to the economic recovery plan. £6m has been approved by the Combined Authority as part of the economic recovery plan to build on these successes and roll out the repurposed programme for two years to support those unemployed, at risk of unemployment or looking to change career. The repurposed programme will link to the additional delivery through the Employment Hub as reported at 2.27.
- 2.20 The [re]boot career changers content continues to be the most viewed section on the FutureGoals website. By end of October the [re]boot page received 1,361-page views and 1,064 unique page views.
- 2.21 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.
- 2.22 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.
- 2.23 [FutureGoals Remote](#) launched in early summer 2020 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.

- 2.24 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.
- 2.25 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.

Apprenticeships and Employment

- 2.26 COVID-19 has had a major impact on delivery and performance of the ESF funded **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 end of quarter two 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%).
- 2.27 As reported previously, as part of the Combined Authority response to COVID-19, in partnership with our local authority delivery partners, we repurposed the Employment Hub in April to provide a 'one stop shop' for job seekers of any age and employers recruiting or making redundancies. As of 18 December, we had supported 577 individuals and 103 businesses. £7.5m has been approved by the Combined Authority as part of the economic recovery plan to build on the Employment Hub successes to roll out the repurposed programme for two years to support those unemployed and at risk of unemployment. The repurposed programme will link to the additional delivery of skills delivery through [re]boot as reported at 2.19.
- 2.28 Interest in the **Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Service** from pledging organisations continues to grow. Following the first match with pledges from Portakabin, we have also been able to announce further pledges including

£1m from Santander in December. We continue to work with a number of organisations looking to utilise our Levy Transfer programme. This is welcomed at a time when businesses and training providers are considering apprenticeship opportunities for spring/ summer 2021 starts.

- 2.29 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/

Skills for Business

- 2.30 The **Skills for Growth** ESF part funded 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. Reporting of business engagement can now start following the Programme Inception Visit from DWP in December.

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.

9. Background Documents

- 9.1 None.

10. Appendices

10.1 None.