
Report to: Employment and Skills Panel

Date: 1 June 2018

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 During the last quarter preparation for new programmes has been underway, as outlined below.

Marketing

- 2.2 The apprenticeship focused telemarketing campaign planned for winter 2018 has been delayed. This is due to the regional data set relating to apprenticeships being unavailable to date. When available the data will be used to assemble a dataset of businesses across the City Region who have not offered apprenticeships in the past.

Transfer of apprenticeship Levy Funds

- 2.3 From April 2018 apprenticeship levy-paying employers will be able to transfer up to 10% of the annual value of the funds entering their apprenticeship service account. Initially, they can transfer funds to one employer who is not part of their group, including smaller employers in their supply chain and apprenticeship training agencies. Transferred funds can be spent on apprenticeship training only.

- 2.4 It is understood that the transfer to just one employer is for a trial period until the systems have been tested, after which time the transfer options will be opened up.

Apprenticeship Grant for Employers - AGE

- 2.5 Awareness raising and marketing activity to promote the new AGE grant will begin in June 2018, with a full launch and access to the programme from 1 August.
- 2.6 Recruitment of staff to run the programme is currently taking place.
- 2.7 Based on previous applications for the apprenticeship grant, we estimate that the programme will be open for applications for 10-12 months, and will be offered on a first come first served basis, subject to funding availability, with a further 3 to 6 months to process the final grant payments.

Apprenticeship Hub Programme

- 2.8 As reported at the March ESP, the ESFA European Social Fund contract for an Apprenticeship Hub programme, currently being delivered by Interserve through their Absolute Apprenticeships programme will come to an end in July 2018.
- 2.9 A new competitive European Social Fund open call for this area of work was released on 26 March 2018. Further details are provided in agenda item 6.

Apprenticeship Promotion in Schools

- 2.10 The original nationally funded pilot programme, in which one of the Combined Authority's Enterprise Coordinators (ECs) was a conduit for raising awareness of and arranging apprenticeship activities in schools alongside the wider team of Enterprise Co-ordinators, has now come to an end. Due to the success of the programme, the work is to be continued across the Leeds City Region and embedded into the role of one of the ECs. This model is also being rolled out across 12 other LEP areas across the country.
- 2.11 Part of the role will be to build stronger links with the Yorkshire & Humber Apprenticeship Ambassador and Young Apprenticeship Ambassador Networks. The two networks have just released their business plans and we are working closely to support the growth of the two networks and the complementarity of both services.
- 2.12 Representatives of the Y & H Ambassador Network sit on each of our three Employment and Skills Advisory Panels.

Raising the Bar on High Level Skills

- 2.13 The Degree Apprenticeship Development Fund 2 programme, overseen by Go Higher West Yorkshire (a partnership of universities and colleges) has now

completed its initial phase, with development of a range of degree apprenticeships. The next stage of the programme is to engage businesses and individuals, with delivery starting in September 2018. More information can be found at <https://www.apprenticesgohigher.co.uk/>.

- 2.14 The Employment and Skills Team continues to work with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) through Go Higher to ensure gaps in provision, particularly at Higher and Degree Apprenticeship level, are being addressed and that provision is accessible for businesses and individuals. This includes the development of qualifications linked to the City Regions key sectors, which institutions such as Leeds Trinity and Leeds Beckett Universities have successfully introduced.
- 2.15 There have been changes in higher education funding governance. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) ceased to exist on 1 April 2018. The Office for Students (OfS) has now taken over the statutory work of HEFCE. OfS is a regulatory body, is part of government and HEIs pay a membership tariff. Changes to funding for higher education, with funding now coming directly from students meant there is no requirement for a 'funding council'.
- 2.16 In February the Government announced a review of post-18 education in England. The review will focus on 4 main areas:
- Value for money: identifying ways to help people make more effective choices between the different options available after 18, so they can make more informed decisions about their futures.
 - Value for money: looking at how students and graduates contribute to the cost of their studies, to ensure funding arrangements across post-18 education in the future are transparent and do not stop people from accessing higher education or training.
 - Access: enabling people from all backgrounds to progress and succeed in post-18 education, while also examining how disadvantaged students receive additional financial support from the government, universities and colleges.
 - Skills provision: future-proofing the economy by making sure we have a post-18 education system that is providing the skills that employers need. This is crucial in boosting the UK economy and delivering on the government's Industrial Strategy.
- 2.17 The review will publish an interim report before concluding in early 2019.

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 are currently recruiting 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

None.