

MCA - EDUCATION, SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON:

TUESDAY, 31 AUGUST 2021 AT 1.00 PM

VIRTUAL MEETING



Present:

Councillor Sir Steve Houghton CBE (Co-Chair)	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Lani-Mae Ball	Doncaster MBC
Councillor Denise Lelliott	Rotherham MBC
Councillor Tim Cheetham	Barnsley MBC
Councillor Paul Turpin	Sheffield CC
Kate Josephs	Sheffield CC
Helen Kemp	MCA Executive Team
Rob Harvey	MCA Executive Team
Angela Foulkes	Chair of Skills Advisory Network
Nici Pickering	MCA Executive Team
Tina Slater	MCA Executive Team
Roger Wilde	MCA Executive Team

In Attendance:

Gillian Richards (Minute Taker)

Apologies:

Nigel Brewster	Private Sector
Professor Chris Husbands	Sheffield Hallam University
Helen George	MCA Executive Team
Gareth Sutton	MCA Executive Team

1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were noted as above.

2 Declarations of Interest by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the agenda

None.

3 Urgent items / Announcements

None.

4 **Public Questions of Key Decisions**

None.

5 **Minutes from Last Meeting**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15th June 2021 be agreed as a true record.

6 **Matters Arising**

None.

7 **Devolved Adult Education Budget Commissioning Update**

A report was submitted which provided the Board with an update on the commissioning process for devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) funded learning.

It was noted that, as of 1st August 2021, the AEB was devolved for South Yorkshire residents. A total of £30.6m had been committed through grants to South Yorkshire based FE Colleges and local authority providers and contracts for provision worth £10.2m had been let for procured provision. All grant agreements and contracts had been issued and the initial commissioning phase was complete.

The Board was informed that more work would need to be done to analyse data on performance as the academic year got underway but there was some positive messages emerging from analysis of delivery plans which showed a shift in provision consistent with the Authority's priorities. Examples of these was contained within the report.

Members noted that the process of commissioning devolved AEB had had an impact on the pre-devolution provider base and this had resulted in representation being made to the Mayor, MPs and members of the ESE Board about the outcomes of the procurement exercise. Devolution was the catalyst for change in approach and outcomes and some degree of disruption was an inevitable consequence.

Where disruption was unavoidable the challenge was to ensure the disruption was explained, justified by the outcomes and mitigated. Officers were working with local authorities to maximise the benefits of the provision that had been commissioned and to develop signposting to help new learners and others to find new programmes.

As the initial commissioning process was over, the Mayor had requested that a 'Lessons Learned' exercise be carried out. This would be done in the autumn and a progress report would be brought to the Board in October.

The Board was informed that following the allocation of the grant funding and the end of the procurement exercise the Authority had approximately £400k AEB unallocated. It was proposed that an analysis of gaps in skills and

employability provision was carried out to inform the approach to allocating the remaining funds. A report would be brought to the October meeting of the Board.

Cllr Turpin commented that whilst it was agreed that there was a need for progression of learning pathways, it was still important to keep the non-regulated pathways open for the most vulnerable and excluded people and expressed concern that left-behind people may face further barriers to progression.

R Harvey replied that the MCA shared those concerns and wanted to ensure that community-based provision remained available. It was felt that the delivery procured through the commissioning process would still be in place and the key initial rungs on the learning ladder would still be available.

Cllr Turpin commented that the impact of the slow process and delays had made the situation difficult in Sheffield. Information on the final tender process had not been received until July which had put a lot of pressure on officers and had left no time to consult with communities. He also expressed disappointment with the loss of funding to the WEA and felt that removing that funding and providing funding to out of town organisations would lead to a competitive market which would cause problems for the community provision organisations.

R Harvey replied that MCA officers had worked with grant holders for more than a year so organisations could have had conversations with potential partners about what their supply chains looked like.

All nine grant holders had been involved in discussions around what the grant would look like and what it would buy. Alongside the grant process there had also been a procurement process which was open to providers across the country and was judged on the merit of the service provided.

In terms of the grant holders and their supply chains, it was entirely up to them to decide who to bring in to provide the best service for their learners.

Cllrs Lelliott and Cheetham felt that the process had worked well in Doncaster and Barnsley and that fair, open and transparent process had been undertaken.

Cllr Turpin provided suggested questions regarding the lessons learned.

RESOLVED – That the Board:

- i) Note the positive changes in the balance of provision across South Yorkshire that was expected to come out of the devolved approach.
- ii) Note the steps being taken in conjunction with local authorities to stimulate collaboration between providers and accountability for delivering in a place.
- iii) Note the need to step up transition arrangements to support learners.

- iv) Note the proposal for a 'Lessons Learned' exercise.
- v) Approve the approach to undertake an analysis of any gaps in skills and employability provision to inform and develop proposals to make full use of AEB and maximise provision for residents.

8 **South Yorkshire Jobs Fund**

A report was considered which provided an update on programme development activity and work undertaken for South Yorkshire Jobs Fund and sought approval to revise the delivery and funding model and also approval to progress the development of a full business case.

The Board was reminded that in March 2021 it had approved funds of up to £1.2m for a test and learn intermediate labour market model to support activities under the People strand of the Authority's Renewal Action Plan.

The working title for the model would be the South Yorkshire Jobs Fund which would cover:

- 6 months wages for eligible participants based on National Living Wage plus National Insurance contributions for up to 30 hours per week.
- £1,500 payment incentive to employers for support covering costs such as administration, support and in-house training.

The Board had been informed previously that the Department for Works and Pensions would provide a secondee to work specifically with key stakeholders to develop and prepare for the launch of the South Yorkshire Jobs Fund. The secondee had now been allocated on a provisional 6-month appointment with an extension agreement with DWP if needed.

Since the approval in March, a steering group had been formed with membership including representatives from partner organisations. Clear Terms of Reference had been developed to set out the roles, responsibilities and accountability of the steering group. The approved Terms of Reference were attached as an appendix to the report.

The Board was informed that, following consultation with members of the steering group, it was agreed that a revision of the original programme design and funding model was required to ensure maximum outcomes were achieved. Full details of the revised programme design, funding model and delivery options were contained within the report.

The report recommended that a delivery partner/partners were outsourced to undertake a business support role, this would be done through an open procurement process. It was confirmed that local authorities could tender for this if they so wished and officers would ensure they were aware of the opportunity.

With regard to Section 10 and climate change implications, Cllr Turpin suggested that businesses who were not having a big impact on the climate

change emergency should be prioritised.

It was thought that this could be worked into the due diligence process where the quality of employers would be looked at to ensure a high standard of work placements. It was agreed that this should not detract from the main aim of getting people back into work.

RESOLVED – That the Board:

- i) Approve the recommended programme design as detailed in section 2.12 – 2.10 of the report.
- ii) Approve the revised funding model as detailed in section 2.11 of the report.
- iii) Approve the recommended delivery option as detailed in Appendix C to the report.
- iv) Approve progression to full business case development.
- v) Agree timescales for project development based on delivery option 1 as detailed in the report.

9

Skills Support for Redundancy Update

A report was submitted which provided an update on initial activity undertaken to consider the skills support requirement for people being made redundant in South Yorkshire in preparation for them finding new roles.

Members were reminded that the ESE Board had approved the recommendation for the MCA to lead some joint work with partners in order to explore how to improve preparedness for dealing with redundancy and develop a coherent offer across the area. It was agreed that the work should consider:

- Intelligence gathering
- Co-ordination and joint working in developing support
- Ways to secure better outcomes for individuals and employers who were coming through the process
- Understanding how the gap in support for employers with 15 or less employees could be stemmed.

Following the decision of the ESE Board, contact was made with regional partners to bring them together to consider the best way of taking the work forward. An initial meeting was held in July covering the background to the meeting, anticipated impact from the end of the furlough scheme and examples of responses from other areas including their successes and challenges and the approach required in South Yorkshire. Full details were contained within the report.

The meeting concluded with the agreement to form a Task and Finish Group, the first priority being to undertake a thorough review of what support and good practice was already in place.

Further activity would cover the challenges outlined in the report including a focus on the region's own skills response and how to address the gap in funding to support training in advance of being made redundant.

A draft forward plan had been developed which was attached at Appendix A.

The Board agreed that the landscape was very uncertain at the moment. There was still too much unknown and there was a need to be able to move quickly and not be too prescriptive.

RESOLVED – That the Board:

- i) Note the activity undertaken to date.
- ii) Note the agreements reached and plans for future activity.
- iii) Request local authorities CEO's continue to support the process by raising with their executive teams.
- iv) Request a short note from Cllr Sir Steve Houghton to Dave Barrow at DWP to secure their support for this initiative.

10 **Skills Advisory Network (SAN) Verbal Update**

A Foulkes gave an update on the work of the Skills Advisory Network (SAN).

The Board was informed that the SAN would next meet in ten days time, on the agenda would be apprenticeships and traineeships. Guests would be attending the meeting to talk about work on the apprenticeship hub and NEET provision and also provision for 16-24 year olds. There would be feedback from the Secretary Heads Group and the Colleges Group.

In the pipeline was discussions around the LSIP Trailblazer and the Strategic Development Fund.

The SAN were just finalising their Work Plan. They would be looking at the impact of Covid-19 on specific sectors and age groups between September and January and would report back to the Board in due course. From November they would be looking at level 3 take up at 18 and above and also the green economy with employer colleagues.

At the next meeting there would be feedback from Chambers and the Federation of Small Businesses to receive much more information on SMEs and micro-businesses.

Cllr Lelliott asked that the Rotherham BMC LEAF event was considered within the SAN planning of events and A Foulkes confirmed that this had already formed part of discussions.

The Chair thanked A Foulkes for the update.

11 **Any Other Business**

None.

In accordance with Combined Authority's Constitution/Terms of Reference for the Board, Board decisions need to be ratified by the Head of Paid Services (or their nominee) in consultation with the Chair of the Board. Accordingly, the undersigned has consulted with the Chair and hereby ratifies the decisions set out in the above minutes.

Signed

Name

Position

Date