

Education Skills and Employment Board

30th October 2020

Role of the Education Skills and Employability Board

Purpose of Report

The paper builds on a discussion to help frame the focus on the ESE Board and to consider an initial programme of work.

Thematic Priority

Develop the SCR skills base, labour mobility and education performance.

Freedom of Information and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

This paper will be made available under the MCA transparency scheme.

Recommendations

That Board Members:

1. Note the key points set out in section 2.1 and comment on whether they provide an appropriate big picture summary.
2. Consider the framework of activity set out in section 3.4 and comment on whether it reflects the direction of the Board appropriately.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** With the completion of the South Yorkshire Devolution Deal securing control over the Adult Education Budget, the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, the continued Government ambition for further devolution and the opportunities secured through the Gainshare resources to invest in skills and employment programmes this is an important time for the Board to consider its strategic intent and particular focus for its work plan.
- 1.2** To shape the discussion at the Board an initial session was convened with Cllr Sir Steve Houghton, Nigel Brewster, Angela Foulkes and the MCA Executive Team. The outcomes of that meeting are reflected in this paper.

2. Proposal and justification

2.1

The big picture

- The Board over time may want to look at **the whole cradle to grave skills system** including developing an end to end employment and skills system with clear progression routes, support and skills acquisition for all those who need it, driven by employers offering good jobs and skilled residents able to access them. Currently we do not have all the levers, capacity or capability to do this.

- There is good provision already available and we should be looking to scale up – do more of what works and don't reinvent the wheel. This means trusting and empowering providers to respond to businesses and individuals
- The pandemic is likely to create **financial challenges for businesses who were looking to invest in their workforce** – but also may stimulate innovation, new business ideas and formation and effect a quicker shift to new sectors.
- **We need a deep and pervasive understanding of what works well and what does not work well**, including an assessment of why major interventions through ESIF and national programmes over a long period have not managed to resolve some of the structural failures in the skills and employment system.
- **Individuals still face significant barriers to employment** including physical and mental health as well as skills gaps.
- **Colleges and training providers** and informed individuals are best placed to know what is needed or best to help either them upskill their workforce or get into a job and get on. we do not yet understand the impact of the pandemic in terms of sector. Decline of traditional 'entry level' jobs. Need to reassess the things we were training people for and shift the focus.
- **C19 means it is very likely that unemployment is going to leave some individuals in our communities even further from the labour market** – the best we may be able to do in the short term is prevent that 'scarring' by keeping them in touch with either a job and / or skills. The pandemic has also had a significant impact on adults who previously have not needed to engage with the "digital world" or were already facing significant barriers to employment. This will be exacerbated by self-isolation and local lockdowns.
- We've still got a **major issue with Level 2 qualifications** – not enough of our people have the basic qualifications that enables them to progress into further learning.
- **Progression of people into further learning (both before, during and after their working life) is a major issue.** The Government's national offer of apprenticeships, traineeships and Kickstart all have their positive elements. Stronger leadership and direction at local level could help to make much better use of the national offer and join those programmes up with local provision.

Does the Board consider this 'big picture' review appropriately reflects the position locally?

2.2 Potential focus for the work of the Board

Beyond the existing work on AEB taking the 'big picture' perspective enables us to draw our focus to a narrower set of potential objectives for the Board. Some proposals for discussion are set out below.

2.3

Making 'sense' of the system locally – knowing what is working well, what has worked well in the past, and what might work well in the future will with greater levels of insight and local intelligence we can gain, will enable the Board to take more empowered decisions.

it would be helpful to gain a steer from the Board on the following:

- is there a clear understanding of what type of support (on the demand and supply side) works well?
- Is there a need to better understand why the current education, funding and skills system continues to fail many of our residents, especially our young people and those furthest from the labour market (noting that we don't control all the levers?)

- Further analysis on how our investment can de-risk the system for individuals wanting to learn and employers wanting to invest in their workforce.

2.4 What can we do directly?

Responding to the impact of the pandemic take the opportunity to develop policy built on better intelligence/evidence. Look strategically at what works locally and do more of it. Focus on making what we can control deliver better results that it has historically. Develop a programme of work that builds upon the national offer but is driven by what is need “in places”. Enable residents to keep in touch with the labour market, tackles known skills gaps enabling people to progress into and in employment or further learning. This work would inform the RAP implementation delivery plan.

2.5 What can we influence?

The Covid pandemic and the Government’s response means that in the short term the focus will be on working effectively across Government, key stakeholders, providers, employers and residents to ensure that we can influence the major national offers e.g. business support; Kickstart; apprenticeships and Traineeships so that as many employers and residents access and benefit from the support available.

It would be helpful to gain a steer from the Board on where we believe we can have the most influence. E.g.

- Helping stimulate employer demand for the opportunities available (employer incentives and marketing and communications efforts.
- Investing in wrap-around support for employers and individuals on local and national schemes.

2.6 What might we want to seek further control of in the future?

In the longer term we may want to consider looking to influence, co-design and where we can take control/ownership to enable the funding whether provided nationally, regionally or locally to deliver the greatest impact for residents.

2.7 Does the Board consider this framework a sensible driver of Board activity, particularly;

- Building our understanding of what works well
- What can we do directly?
- What can we influence?
- What might we want to seek further control of in the future?

Are there other elements the Board considers important for the workplan to include?

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

3.1 n/a

4. Implications

4.1 **Financial**
n/a

4.2 **Legal**
n/a

4.3 **Risk Management**
n/a

4.4 **Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion**
An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken.

5. Communications

5.1 There are no direct communications implications in this report.

6. Appendices/Annexes

6.1 n/a

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references: