

## Business Recovery and Growth Board

28 October 2021

### Renewal Action Plan Business Support Evaluation

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Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Purpose of this report:	Discussion
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan?	Not a Key Decision

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**Director Approving Submission of the Report:**

Helen Kemp, Director of Business and Skills

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**Executive Summary**

Following on from the Business and Recovery and Growth Board's agreement to an interim analysis of the Renewal Acton Plan delivery related to Business Advisors and the Additional Restrictions Grant, this paper sets out the current position using findings from April – September 2021.

**What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?**

Support for businesses to survive, adapt and thrive through the Covid pandemic and beyond, establishing opportunities for business growth, new jobs and increased supply chain activity across South Yorkshire.

**Recommendations**

This paper is an opportunity for the Board to understand the current delivery of business support offered under the Renewal Action Plan Employers area of action. The Board are asked to approve actions to improve intelligence gathering.

**Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel**

Business Recovery and Growth Board

01 September 2021

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## **1. Background**

- 1.1 At the Business and Recovery Growth Board 1 Sept 2021, the Board agreed to an interim analysis of the Renewal Acton Plan (RAP) delivery related to Business Advisors and the Additional Restrictions Grant. Appendix A provides the contextual background to these streams of RAP activity.
- 1.2 The data collected to date allows analysis to be undertaken at both Local Authority and regional level and provides an opportunity to understand basic trends and opportunities. The data provided for the RAP Business Advisors includes a breakdown of sectors, spend per business size, and hours spent per business size across the local authorities alongside officer and Advisor feedback and is provided at Appendix B.
- 1.3 The analysis of the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) is ongoing and in future will include information on the Digital Innovation Grant scheme and how each LA monitors outputs. The data presented at the last Board meeting suggested that the ARG schemes have successfully contracted for the creation of 642 jobs across the region. The cost per job profiled to be created is £8,700 (it should be noted that job creation takes time to be implemented following a grant application and it is unlikely these outputs can be confirmed for a period of up to 12 months).
- 1.4 The Specialist Framework has not been established and therefore not yet yielded outputs. A clearly defined specification that allows a robust procurement process to be undertaken has not been agreed. Activity to date in this area and the outcome of a small pilot to gauge what specialisms were in demand is provided at Appendix C.
- 1.5 Members are asked to note that the current disparate nature of intelligence gathering both internally and externally, raises the concern that the data may contain inaccuracies. It should also be noted that business classifications cover a broad range of activity, the potential for overlap in the definitions used means the sectoral breakdown

## **2. Key Issues**

- 2.1 The exercise has proven useful in understanding what data is and isn't available across the region through the Business Advisor deployment. Reporting is disparate, the MCA executive team receive Business Advisor timesheets and activity sheets which give minimum intelligence on activity. Weekly informal meetings are held with Local Authorities to obtain a snapshot of business challenges, opportunities and signposting to relevant partners; this information is used to populate the regular reports which must be submitted to BEIS as part of Growth Hub reporting conditions.
- 2.2 The available RAP Business Advisor data demonstrates the variety of business sectors that have been engaged. A high number of micro business have received support through this period, discussions with local authorities confirm this has largely been to the impacts of the Covid pandemic and the businesses that have been most affected. During normal operation it would be expected that Business Advisors would be mainly focussed on supporting Small and Medium sized Enterprises.

- 2.3 Each of the local authorities has deployed the Business Advisors in different ways, adapting the approach to suit their local businesses needs and to fit with their existing teams. Three of the four local authorities have used Business Advisors to provide specialist support to help businesses survive through the pandemic and start working towards recovery and growth. The remaining local authority area has focussed their assigned Business Advisors to support businesses in applying for Economic Relief Grants.
- 2.4 All local authority officers value the close links with Business Advisors that this operating model brings. However, 3 of the 16 Advisors have raised concerns that this approach does not allow them to fully utilise their skills/specialisms to businesses across the wider region.

### **3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal**

#### **3.1 Option 1**

It is recommended that:

- Intelligence gathering and reporting is to be standardised across the 4 partner local authority areas.
- The MCA Exec team work with partners to build on the basic information gathered through Business Advisor Engagement to enable the identification of trends, challenges and opportunities for future business support programme development; this would support a more proactive rather than reactive approach to business engagement and support.
- MCA Officers investigate other models of business support (e.g. similar growth hub areas) and explore with local authority teams through the RAP Employer Delivery Group, where opportunities to improve the existing model exist. To feedback to the Board for

#### **3.2 Option 1 Risks and Mitigations**

This will require additional input from MCA officers and partners that could pull limited resource capacity away from current delivery. Managing this with a clearly defined outcome goal and through existing network meetings and discussions will minimise this impact. The benefits of completing this work would inform and improve the focus of future business support across all partners.

#### **3.3 Option 2**

Do nothing at this stage and wait for a clearer understanding of the impact and longevity of the pandemic.

#### **3.4 Option 2 Risks and Mitigations**

The risk of doing nothing means opportunities to respond to business support needs could be missed resulting in lower rates of post pandemic business survival and growth.

### **4. Consultation on Proposal**

- 4.1 Local Authority officers have been consulted to provide insight into the operation of the Renewal Action Plan Business Support schemes.

## **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 The Assistant Director Development and Business Support will be responsible for implementing the decision by the end of the year.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice**

6.1 No implications have been identified at this time.

## **7. Legal Implications and Advice**

7.1 No implications have been identified at this time.

## **8. Human Resources Implications and Advice**

8.1 No implications have been identified at this time.

## **9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice**

9.1 No implications have been identified at this time.

## **10. Climate Change Implications and Advice**

10.1 No implications have been identified at this time.

## **11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice**

11.1 None

## **12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice**

12.1 No implications have been identified at this time.

### **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix A: Context

Appendix B: RAP Business Advisors data

Appendix C: RAP Specialist Advisor Support

### **Background Papers**

Business Recovery and Growth Board 1 September 2021 – Renewal Action Plan Activity Update