

Local Enterprise Partnership

04 November 2021

Education, Skills and Employability Update

Is the paper exempt from the press and public? No

Purpose of this report: Discussion

Funding Stream: Not applicable

Is this a Key Decision?
No

Has it been included on the Forward Plan?
Yes

Director Approving Submission of the Report:
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Executive Summary:

This paper provides an update for the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board across the range of the LEP and Mayoral Combined Authority's (MCA) skills and employment activity.

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

Investment in education, skills and employability will be used to drive a change in the ambitions of our South Yorkshire residents, put employers at the heart of our skills and employability system, contributing to inclusion, prosperity, and growth.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that LEP Board members:

- Note the updates on each of the key skills and employability work areas
- Consider the invitation to nominate a champion for careers hub activities as at 2.3.4.

Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel
Education Skills and Employability Board 19 October 2021

1. **Background**

- 1.1 Under direction from the Education, Skills and Employability Thematic Board (ESEB) significant work is underway on a range of skills and employability activity including:
- Skills provision for residents aged 19+ commissioned through the Adult Education Budget (AEB);
 - Development of a Skills Strategy;
 - Update on the South Yorkshire Careers Hub;
 - Procurement of phase 3 of Skills Bank;
 - An update on skills support for redundancy work;
 - Timeline for implementation of the South Yorkshire Jobs Fund programme;
 - An update on Working Win, the health-related employment programme.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) commissioning

- 2.1.1 Adult learning provision commissioned through the devolved SYMCA Adult Education Budget (AEB) went live on 1st August 2021. The devolved budget is over £42m in 2021-22. Of this, SYMCA has commissioned £30.6m provision from pre-entry level through to Level 3 from grant funded providers including FE Colleges and local authorities. Provision valued at £10.2m was procured to deliver provision under four Lots focused on helping people find work, supporting people to remain in and progress at work, support for young people at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and support for people facing multiple barriers to learning.
- 2.1.2 In line with our aims, SYMCA's commissioning approach has changed the provider base delivering AEB funded learning to residents. The total number of providers who are funded directly for delivery has reduced from 238 to 26 and the proportion of funding going to South Yorkshire providers as a % of the total has increased from 68% to 75%. These changes are allowing a more strategic dialogue to develop around priorities and will increase accountability for ensuring that our investment in skills has more impact within the area.
- 2.1.3 Changes to the provider landscape have resulted in some challenges as learners have begun to move between providers and programmes. To support this transition, work has taken place to improve provider information on the SYMCA website; with local authorities to develop understanding of what is available in each locality;, and information about AEB provision will be available through the START all age careers platform as it develops.
- 2.1.4 There are some very positive messages emerging from analysis of delivery plans which show a shift in provision consistent with the Authority's priorities. Within grant funded provision this includes:
- an increase of over 20% in all regulated/entitlement basic skills provision
 - a 284% increase in provision for basic digital skills
 - doubling of opportunities for young people to undertake Full Level 2 programmes
 - a significant increase in Level 3 programmes, including 1000 new opportunities at Level 3 for adults aged 24+.
- 2.1.5 Under the procured provision element of AEB there has been a shift in provision for people who are unemployed with a significant focus on Sector Work Academy Programmes offering rounded skills support, work experience and a guaranteed interview. Over 3,200 places are expected to be available. In addition there has been a moderate increase in the number of enrolments available for low skilled employees over the baseline year of 2018/19, both in basic skills and in progression learning. Within this overall figure, there is a significant shift in enrolments towards regulated progression learning including:

- increases in Full Level 2 provision from around 10 (estimate) to 1060
- 462 new opportunities for second Level 2 provision (baseline 0)
- 452 new opportunities for first Full Level 3 provision (baseline 7)
- 513 new opportunities for Level 3 units, with a baseline of 0

2.1.6 Test and Learn pilots procured under AEB are also offering focussed support to more at risk groups:

- 430 new programmes to support vulnerable young people including those not in education, employment or training (NEET) across South Yorkshire delivered as a Test and Learn pilot
- 721 integrated employability / key worker learning opportunities across South Yorkshire as part of the key-worker Test and Learn pilot.

Further analysis of the impact of the SYMCA's commissioning approach will be provided this academic year continues and provider performance is monitored.

2.1.7 LEP Board members will also want to be aware that the ESEB has commissioned a Lessons Learned review to be undertaken, framed around encouraging recommendations for future AEB commissioning.

2.1.8 The timeline for reviewing performance at the mid-year point, including any further opportunities to procure additional provision is in development. The approach to determining the allocation of funding for the next academic year and the priorities that need to be addressed through the commissioning process is also being developed.

2.2 Skills Strategy

2.2.1 On behalf of the Mayor, MCA and LEP and in line with the Corporate Plan the ESEB is in the process of agreeing the basis of the Skills Strategy, for presentation to a future Board. The Strategy will support delivery of the Strategic Economic Plan and the Renewal Action Plan as well as the emerging Inclusion Strategy. It will also draw on the economic and skills strategies for each of the local authority areas, identifying where a role for SYMCA could add value.

2.2.2 The Skills Strategy will also need to draw on evidence from the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Trailblazer that is being led by the Chambers of Commerce, ensuring the strategy retains relevance once the current Skills Bill had passed into legislation. The Trailblazer is a valuable opportunity to gain better understanding of local employer skills needs and how the skills system needs to respond to ensure those needs are met.

2.3 Careers Advice and Guidance

2.3.1 2020-21 was the first year for which the LEP / SYMCA received funding from the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) for a South Yorkshire Careers Hub. The benefits of bringing together former hubs in Sheffield and Doncaster were to create a stronger link between the hub and the LEP's strategic priorities, to create a more robust and high quality offer to young people across South Yorkshire and to facilitate sharing of good practice and expertise across careers advisers in the four local authority areas.

- 2.3.2 In its first year, the hub has faced a number of challenges including some churn in staffing and the impact of the pandemic which has affected all face to face interaction between Enterprise Co-ordinators, Enterprise Advisers and Schools.
- 2.3.3 Good progress in addressing these issues is now being made, led by the South Yorkshire hub operational lead working with Enterprise Co-ordinators across the region. The team is focusing on a number of key issues including:
- Input and Impact – ensuring the hub makes a measurable difference to young people;
 - Universal and Targeted support – with provision for all young people and barriers removed for those at risk of losing out;
 - Strategic and Systemic – ensuring the right leadership of the system to embed careers advice as part of economic growth with mutually beneficial partnerships developing between business and schools / colleges.
- 2.3.4 A new strategic plan is in development and will underpin hub activity and monitoring of performance. In order to strengthen the work that hub leads have started to link to the SEP and to develop the narrative with schools, colleges it would be extremely helpful to have support from the LEP Board in the form of a business champion for careers activity. The role would involve strengthening the link between careers activity and the SEP, helping to develop the narrative to communicate to young people via schools and colleges and supporting engagement with Enterprise Advisers. **Does the Board want to nominate a champion to support this work?**
- 2.4 **Skills Bank**
- 2.4.1 In accordance with the approval of papers presented to the LEP on 1 July 2021 and discussions at the ESE Board, the Skills Bank 3 procurement process is underway. The procurement will close in December and bidders will be notified of the outcome in February. This is in good time to issue contracts and transition to new arrangements before the programme begins in April 2022.
- 2.5 **Skills Support for Redundancy**
- 2.5.1 Following a commission by the ESEB and as reported to the LEP in July, a piece of work was undertaken with partner organisations including local authorities and DWP to consider whether sufficient skills provision was in place in the event of the pandemic creating a situation of increased redundancies. The group were tasked with identifying where there were gaps in support and identify what funding request would need to be made to the MCA.
- 2.5.2 Evidence from ONS and HMRC labour market data and the BEIS small business survey suggested that the risk of a significant increase in redundancies was reducing and that employment was more likely to grow than decline. The group identified that there was a wide range of support available for those at risk of redundancy. Therefore, the recommendation accepted by the ESE Board in October 2021 was that a focus on a more joined up and better communication of existing offers rather than the need for new provision.
- 2.5.3 LEP Board members will want to note that as this is an existing function for local authorities and there is no request for additional investment, Chief Executives have agreed to progress this piece of work.
- 2.6 **South Yorkshire Jobs Fund**

- 2.6.1 As reported to the LEP Board in July, work is underway to develop the South Yorkshire Jobs Fund, a paid employment programme for residents aged 25+ who have been out of work for 6 months. The development of the programme is being supported by a Steering Group with representation from all four local authorities, Chambers of Commerce, TUC, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and a learning provider.
- 2.6.2 Good progress continues to be and the tender is planned to go out in November seeking a provider to work with employers and manage payments to them to cover wages, training etc. The programme is scheduled to go live in February 2022.
- 2.6.3 This programme will be funded through Gainshare as proposed in the Renewal Action Plan. A full business case will go to the Assurance Panel in November and final approval will be sought from SYMCA in January 2022.
- 2.7. **Working Win**
- 2.7.1 Working Win is our health-related employment programme, funded by the Work and Health Unit in DWP. The programme helps people with a health condition find and remain in employment and is an important intervention to overcoming the health barriers that affect employment rates in South Yorkshire.
- 2.7.2 At present, funding has been secured for 12 months from September 2021, with the expectation being that referrals will close at the end of May 2022. However, there may be the possibility of an extension for a further two years, funding dependent. This round of Working Win focuses on individuals with low to moderate mental health and/or physical health condition(s). The programme supports individuals who are either unemployed or in work and struggling or in work and off sick.
- 2.7.3 It is challenging for those employed or returning to work, many individuals are anxious about using public transport, social distancing whilst at work and in some job roles e.g. retail and social care are having to deal with the brunt of anger and frustration felt by customers or the stress by family members. At a national level, the impact on mental health throughout the pandemic has been severe. When asked what people are most concerned about, a ONS survey found the most common response to be personal wellbeing, including anxiety and stress.
- 2.7.4 In addition to supporting COVID recovery, the Working Win programme aims to advance the goals of the LEP/MCA to deliver inclusive growth by tackling high unemployment rates among people with a mental or physical health condition. The figures reported for September show that Working Win supported the following number of individuals onto programme ensuring SMART action plans have been developed together with the individual, employment specialist and preferably health worker:
- 95 unemployed people
 - 19 people that are currently in work but struggling
 - 6 people that are currently in work but off sick
- 2.7.5 Pipeline figures for October (as at the 20 October 2021) show a further 223 people have been supported onto the programme, which is above programme target. However, this figure will have to be verified and approved upon submission of a claim.
- 2.8.1 The Renewal Action Plan identified four interventions within the 'South Yorkshire Works' programme to be delivered through a mix of direct delivery through the LEP/MCA as well as linking in with broader initiatives and government funded schemes. Activities in addition

to those that are detailed above and that are progressing in each intervention are outlined below.

- 2.8.2 Train to Work – guarantees that any individual in South Yorkshire who wants and needs education, training or an apprenticeship will have an opportunity to do so and be supported into sustainable employment.
- Sector Work Academy Programmes, giving people the opportunity to train, gain work experience and have a guaranteed interview. SYMCA has commissioned 3200 SWAPs through AEB funding for 2021-22.
 - In January 2021, the Government launched its Skills White Paper, including provisions for delivery of the Prime Minister’s Lifetime Skills Guarantee. The Guarantee allows people without a Full level 3 qualifications (broadly the equivalent of 2 A levels) to study from a high value list of Level 3 qualifications for free to improve skills and support progression. This is important for South Yorkshire where very little vocational provision at Level 3 was delivered before devolution. SYMCA received £2.79m as part of its devolved funding for 2021-22 and the vast majority of that funding has been used to commission Level 3 provision from the four South Yorkshire based FE Colleges.
- 2.8.3 Back to Work – focuses solely on finding employment opportunities for people out of work and providing education and training that enables people to upskill themselves to match the opportunities.
- The Restart Programme was announced on 25 November 2020 in the Spending Review 2020 and offers employment placements and training to help people out of work for between 12 and 18 months. The number of both entrants and job starts has tripled throughout the region from August to September. Although there are no official targets, DWP are referring approximately 200 customers per month, of those, 10% achieved a job start in August and 12% in September. Since the start of the programme in August there have been 83 job starts.
- 2.8.4 Young people’s skills guarantee – with a focus upon the most ‘at risk’ young people this intervention aims to support young job seekers to secure and remain in employment.
- Kickstart - a programme offering 6-month work placements to young people aged 16-24, on Universal Credit and deemed to be at risk of long-term unemployment. The Chancellor announced an extension of the Kickstart programme until March 2022 meaning participants can start the programme up to 31/3/22. A total of 11,900 Kickstart jobs had been made available in Yorkshire and Humber and 3,700 young people have started Kickstart jobs by 21st July 2021. The South Yorkshire Kickstart scheme was linked with the promotion of travel concessions in the region to support young people further.
 - An Expanded Youth Offer – including provision of youth hubs to support 18-24 year olds is being delivered through the Sheffield College youth hub, due to go live on 15th November and will be followed by other hubs in Sheffield and satellite hubs in Doncaster.
 - A focus on better preparing young people for progression into an apprenticeship and incentives for employers to take on trainees has resulted in a successful bid by South Yorkshire Colleges Group led by Barnsley College. Securing over £1m for traineeships for adults for the 20-21 academic year for the region.
- 2.8.5 Overcome barriers – the target of this intervention is to help people to re-engage with the labour market, focussing on the most vulnerable in our communities. The Working Win scheme and the AEB Test and Learn pilots referred to at 2.1.6 and 2.7 are key elements in delivering support where most needed. The ESE Board gave approval at the 19 October 2021 meeting for the development of an additional support and skills programme for

residents with specific needs based on two proposals for a Disadvantaged Learners Pilot and the Early Integrated Employment Support for Claimants at Risk of Long-Term Unemployment.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 This is an update paper which covers a range of skills and employment activity. Details of the options considered by the ESEB are set out in the relevant background papers listed.

4. Consultation on Proposal

4.1 Arrangements for consultation and for stakeholder working are presented within each separate activity and outlined in more detail within respective papers listed under background papers.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision:

5.1 Relevant timescales are presented within each separate activity and outlined in more detail within respective papers listed under background papers.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice

6.1 Financial and Procurement Implications have been obtained for each element of activity and are included in detail in the respective papers which are listed under background papers. The table below provides an overview of this information:

6.2

Workstrand	Funding	Source	Procurement / delivery
AEB	£42m for academic year 2021-22. We anticipate at least £39.3m for 2022-23 based on SY share of national budget, but subject to confirmation. Possibility of additional funding through SR announcements.	Devolved funding from central government	Initial commissioning complete for 2021-22 academic year and programmes are live. Mid-year reconciliation may allow some further commissioning / reallocation of funding.
Skills Bank	£10.7m total (approx. fig. Will depend on final allocation to skills bank interim programme)	LEP funding held by MCA	Interim programme in place until 31 st March. Skills Bank 3 spec in development. Tender to go live early November. Decisions notified Jan 2022. New contract from 1 st April 2022.
Working Win	£2.2m - 12 months from September 2021	DWP Working Health Unit	Contract in place – went live Sept 2021. Potential for 3 yr extension. However, it is likely that DWP will

			want to commission differently for future programmes.
CEC Careers Hub	£406,300 for 2021-22.	Careers and Enterprise Company (funding from DfE)	DfE contract in place for 2021-22. We have funding agreements to put in place with each local authority.
South Yorkshire Jobs Fund	£4m total	Gainshare	Plans are to go out to tender in November and programme to go live in February.
Skills Support for Redundancy	No funding identified for the piece of work listed. This was a piece of co-ordination work.		

7. Legal Implications and Advice

7.1 Legal Implications and Advice have been obtained for each element of activity and included in the respective papers which are listed under background papers

8. Human Resources Implications and Advice

8.1 HR Implications and Advice have been obtained for each element of activity and included in the respective papers which are listed under background papers

9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

9.1 Equality and Diversity implications and advice have been obtained for each element of activity and included in the respective papers which are listed under background papers

10. Climate Change Implications and Advice

10.1 Climate Change implications and advice have been considered for each element of activity and included in the respective papers which are listed under background papers

11.

11.1 ICT implications have been obtained for each element of activity and included in the respective papers which are listed under background papers

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice.

12.1 Communication and Marketing implications and advice have been obtained for each element of activity and included in the respective papers which are listed under background papers

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers:

AEB Update paper from 31st August Education, Skills and Employability Board

AEB Lessons Learned paper from 19th October Education, Skills and Employability Board

Careers Board paper from the June 21 Education, Skills and Employability Board.

Skills Bank Operating Model paper from the June 21 Education, Skills and Employability Board.

Skills Support for Redundancy Paper from 31st August Education, Skills and Employability Board

South Yorkshire Jobs Fund paper from 31st August Education, Skills and Employability Board