

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 8th January 2014

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Children and Enterprise.

PORTFOLIO: Economic Development

SUBJECT: Employment, Learning & Skills Quarterly Policy Update

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform the Board of recent national policy announcements relevant to employment, learning and skills.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

2.1 That the report is noted.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 A number of policy, legislation, consultation and guidance documents, are issued by government departments and agencies that have varying degrees of relevance to issues on the employment, learning and skills agenda and related topics.

3.2 A brief summary of key announcements is provided in this report along with observations of local relevance, where appropriate, so the Board can consider whether to initiate more detailed scrutiny and/or report to a future meeting.

4.0 NEW POLICY, STRATEGY AND STATUTORY GUIDANCE

This Policy round-up summarises new policy, research, consultations and other publications that may be of interest to Children’s Trust and Employment, Learning and Skills partners. It is provided as a series of short summaries, with links to the source documentation included for further information (links accessible through titles).

The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan

The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Implementation Plan details the government’s reforms to the Apprenticeship system, and outlines how they will be implemented.

The key elements of the reforms are introducing new employer-designed standards and assessment procedures; strengthening English and maths requirements; and mandating that Apprenticeships last for a minimum of 12 months. The new standards and assessment procedures will be designed over 2013/14 and 2014/15 by companies and professional bodies acting as ‘trailblazers’ for their sector. From 2017/18 all new Apprenticeship starts should be based on the new standards.

Care Leaver Strategy

The Government has published a cross-departmental [strategy](#) for young people leaving care. It pulls together into one document recent actions and future plans for each of the major service areas which can be 'areas of concern' for care leavers. Too many care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or are long term unemployed. What has been, and will be, done includes:

- the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are providing a range of initiatives for 18-24 year olds, including care leavers, through the [Youth Contract](#)
- Jobcentre Plus advisors have been given more flexibility to provide direct support to care leavers, and have access to local flexible support funding
- Care leavers are able to access the DWP Work Programme from the third month of their benefit claim
- DfE funds Catch22 to run [FromCare2Work programme](#), supporting LAs to place employability on the corporate parenting agenda, and enable employer engagement
- DWP has introduced a 'marker' to identify care leavers on their information database, and is raising awareness of Jobcentre Plus advisors of issues faced by care leavers.

5.0 Research, Consultations and General Information

[Proposal to establish a combined authority for Greater Merseyside](#)

This consultation seeks views on the proposal that a combined authority for the area of Greater Merseyside should be established, and on the proposed structure, constitution and functions of the new authority. The Department of Communities and Local Government has invited people and organisations to respond to a proposal to establish a combined authority for Greater Merseyside by 22 January 2014.

[OECD Skills Outlook 2013: Key findings](#)

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has conducted its first Survey of Adult Skills across a number of countries assessing skills of the entire adult population. The adult survey was based on the assessment of 166,000 adults in 24 education systems in education populations of 724 million. The Survey of Adult Skills collects information on how skills are used at home, in the workplace and in the community; how these skills are developed, maintained and lost over a lifetime; and how these skills are related to labour market participation, income, health, and social and political engagement. Young people in England and Northern Ireland participated in the survey. The key headlines were that England came 22nd in literacy and 21st in numeracy out of 24 countries and unlike other developed countries, the study also showed that young people in England performed not much better than older people in the 55-65 age-range.

[Regional policy for smart growth and SME support](#)

This LGIU briefing draws on EU documents on smart specialisation, innovation, and SME support in regional or local economic development. Smart specialisation is an 'ex ante' condition for spending on certain thematic objectives of the European Investment and Structural Funds, and is a crucial EU policy for economic development. This briefing also reviews how some LEPs have approached smart specialisation. It will be of interest to

members and officers with an interest in local economic development, or involved in partnerships with LEPs.

6.0 Funding Information

Investment and campaign to help small firms grow

The British Business Bank is investing £45 million to boost finance for small businesses. This is the first allocation of funds from the bank's £300 million investment programme launched in April. The British Business Bank will support economic growth by bringing together public and private sector funds to create more effective and efficient finance markets for small and medium-sized businesses in the UK. The British Business Bank is a key element of the government's Industrial Strategy. The British Business Bank programme is currently run directly by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. A new business support website, www.greatbusiness.gov.uk will also make it easy to access the services and products, including [Manufacturing Advice Service](#), [National Apprenticeship Service](#) and [Growth Accelerator](#) that help businesses grow.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

7.1 The varied range of issues covered in this report potentially present a number of challenges and opportunities across a number of the Council's current priorities. Where appropriate a more detailed analysis of the information and relevance to the council will take place.

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

8.1.1 There are no immediate risks directly relating to the information in the report.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

9.1.1 Not applicable.

10.0 FURTHER INFORMATION

10.1 If members would a more detailed analysis of any of the issues mentioned in this report, or paper copy of any of the documents referred to, the should contact; Debbie Houghton at Debbie.houghton@halton.gov.uk or 0151 511 8231

11.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None under the meaning of the Act. (For information - Hyperlinks to all of the full reports are embedded within the headings.)