

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

**DATE:** 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** Economic Development

**SUBJECT:** **Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Hub:**  
Apprenticeship Growth Plan 2018-2020 and  
ESF Employees Support in Skills Contract

**WARDS:** Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 Liverpool City Region (LCR) Apprenticeship Hub Skills Strategy Manager, will be in attendance at this meeting and will make a presentation to members of the Board to provide an overview on progress to date against the City Region's Apprenticeship Growth Plan 2018 - 2020 and a review of the ESF Employees' Support in Skills contract awarded by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

**2.1 Members acknowledge the positive work being undertaken by the Apprenticeship Hub.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Hub has operated since 2011 and is a good example of close collaborative and partnership work that exists within the City Region. The team is employed by Halton Borough Council on behalf of the Combined Authority and is located in Kingsway Learning Centre, although operates across the City Region.

### **3.2 ESF Employees' Support in Skills Contract**

The contract commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2017 with an end date of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2018. Following the success of the contract, a business case was submitted to the ESFA and subsequently approved for an extension, with further funding to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019.

Total funding was used to deliver on a series of Apprenticeship Hub related activities to the value of £1,313,420 and included:

- Apprenticeship promotion capacity funding, with a focus on preparing employers and training providers for Apprenticeship Reform;
- Skills Show related activity to inspire and engage young people and residents in understanding their future careers opportunities; and

- Labour market intelligence including research and policy work to understand Liverpool City Region's skills supply and demand and improve economic growth by creating a more productive workforce.

As an indication of the value that the service offered, it is useful to share some impactful statistics for the City Region:

- 33 skills shows & events delivered to 14,933 residents aged 15+, of which 1756 individuals (12%) were from Halton.
- 1131 targeted outreach meetings delivered to residents, schools, employers, JCPs, adult learning services and key stakeholders to raise awareness of apprenticeships to 25,290 individuals, of which 3215 individuals (13%) and 214 outreach meetings were from Halton.
- 97 Apprenticeship Awareness theatre productions delivered in schools to 15,194 students, of which 2285 (15%) were from Halton. Questionnaires were issued after each performance to all students, resulting in students' knowledge of Apprenticeships increasing by 80%.
- Launch of the LCR Apprenticeship Growth Plan (March 2018)
- 14 Skills for Growth Action Plan launches and associated Careers Materials produced in all LEP priority sectors

### **3.3 Apprenticeship Growth Plan 2018-2019**

In March 2018, the Combined Authority launched an ambitious Apprenticeship Growth Plan for the City Region, to both maximise the local contribution to national apprenticeship targets and mitigate against the unintended consequence of apprenticeship reform. The Apprenticeship Hub is a key mechanism in achieving the apprenticeship ambitions outlined in the Growth Plan.

Key progress to-date:

- Raised awareness of Apprenticeships through high profile events and media campaigns, including a LCR wide Skills Show at the Exhibition Centre Liverpool, a series of Local Authority Skills Shows, one of which was at the Heath Technical and Business Park, Runcorn and an Apprenticeship Graduation Ceremony held at St Georges Hall in March 2019
- Discounted apprentice bus travel for 19-24 year olds
- Established a City Region Ambassador Network with 22 local employers and their apprentices who champion the apprenticeship agenda
- Launched UK's first UCAS-style Apprenticeship Application Portal '*Be more, be an apprentice*' to simplify how individuals explore, search and apply for apprenticeship opportunities. <https://be-more.info/>
- Further Skills Brokerage support for employers providing a single gateway for free and impartial brokerage services.

## **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Apprenticeship Growth Plan was developed following comprehensive consultation and research into apprenticeship delivery and take up in Liverpool City Region. The Apprenticeship Reforms came into play in May 2017 and data available to date demonstrates a reduction in the number of apprenticeship starts nationally. This reinforces the need to continue to

implement the actions described above. Interestingly, Halton's local college, Riverside College is bucking this trend with an increase in the number of apprenticeships introduced. Therefore, the continuation of the Apprenticeship Hub and the production of the Growth Plan signals the continued importance of apprenticeships to the City region to our residents and the employers who drive our local economy. It is acknowledged that its growth aspirations are set within a time of challenging apprenticeship reforms. For this reason, the Growth Plan will be reviewed every 6 months during its 3 year life span.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The activities undertaken since February 2017 have been delivered using external Education & Skills Funding Agency grant for the Apprenticeship Hub until the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019; as such there are no financial implications for the Council.
- 5.2 The Combined Authority are working with the Apprenticeship Hub to secure alternative funding to sustain and enhance skills and apprenticeship advice and support across the City Region. The proposed new service will build on the innovative and successful practice of this programme and provide added value through a centralised approach. The service will focus on three elements of activity: Employer Brokerage, Apprenticeship Promotion and Sector Development, and Careers Support. This proposal would see a move for the Apprenticeship Hub Team from Halton Borough Council to the Combined Authority.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

The demographics of the 16-18 year old cohort in the City Region is declining year on year; this will have an impact on the working age population, the labour market and the numbers of young people engaging in apprenticeships and study programme starts in the local FE sector. The volume of 16-18 residents in Liverpool City Region is not expected to return to 2014 levels until 2028. Apprenticeship starts as a proportion of the 16-19 cohort has also seen a reduction from 8.1% in 2015/16 to 7.4% in 2016/17 – i.e. a lower proportion of the cohort are choosing the apprenticeship route.

6.1.2 To maintain the volume of 16-18 apprenticeships delivered, the City Region will need to increase the proportion of local residents aged 16-18 entering apprenticeships by informing and advising more of them of the benefits of apprenticeships and ensuring high quality progression pathways are available.

6.1.3 The Combined Authority will build on the excellent work already undertaken by the Apprenticeship Hub and others in engaging with schools, young people and their parents including extending the Apprentice Ambassador Network, delivering interactive Skills Shows and providing school students with information and publicity on apprenticeships.

## **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

The Apprenticeship Hub has 3 key priority stakeholder groups, namely Employers, Providers and Learners, which aim to promote the growth and type of apprenticeships in the City Region and therefore support employment, learning and skills. The role of Higher and Degree level apprenticeships needs to be more clearly defined as a progression route from technical education as part of preparations for changes resulting from the Government's Post-16 Skills Plan and Industrial Strategy.

6.2.4 Apprenticeships are all age and the Growth Plan sets out the ambition for the City Region to grow the volumes, types of high quality apprenticeships to ensure appropriate skills pathways are in place that will lead to sustainable employment for its residents.

## **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The psychological benefits of apprenticeships improve the participants' mental health and wellbeing.

## **6.4 A Safer Halton**

None.

## **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

None at present.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

The service is open and accessible to all Halton residents

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.