

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning & Skills and Community
PPB

DATE: 20th June 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director Economy, Enterprise &
Property

PORTFOLIO: Employment Learning & Skills and Community

SUBJECT: Liverpool City Region Employment & Skills
Update

WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To update Members on a number of employment and skills developments in the Liverpool City Region.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Policy and Performance Board receive the information and comment as relevant.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority leads on a number of employment and skills initiatives. This report sets out a number of these, providing most recent information.

Adult Education Budget (AEB) Procurement

3.1.1 AEB is devolved from Government to the Combined Authority (CA) and the CA is approaching the end of the first AEB three year commissioning cycle. A new 5 year commissioning cycle has recently been completed and details of providers that were successful have now been published. Further information will be provided at the meeting. However, Halton's Adult Learning Service and Riverside College receive AEB via a grant and are, therefore, not subject to the AEB procurement process.

3.1.2 The CA has undertaken a data and financial comparison exercise for the 1st 2 full academic years of AEB devolution (19/20 and 20/21) to help inform the latest commissioning round. Overall spend increased from 2019/20 by almost £5m, although it should be noted that both years were impacted severely by the pandemic which should be considered when comparing data. Grant funded providers were permitted to retain 100% of their allocation – however, for the current 21/22 year this will not be the case.

3.1.3 Through the original tender process, procured contract for service providers (i.e. non grant funded) were asked to outline the social value impact of the award of an AEB contract. The Local Authority and College grant funded providers also clearly contribute to the impact of locally spent AEB and have been included in the CA's most recent exercise to review the collective social value impact. This report is yet to be published.

- 3.1.4 The CA introduced 'Test and Learn' pilots as part of AEB devolution. These enabled providers to deliver innovation in adult education and raise levels of participation, attainment and improved social mobility in the City Region. As the title suggests, the pilots enabled providers to test out some new approaches with a view to mainstreaming if successful. HBC's Adult Learning Team have delivered a number of Test and Learns including training Reading Volunteers to work with non-readers on a 1:1 basis. The CA established a number of Test and Learn Thematic Groups where providers, delivering similar themes, could come together to collaborate, learn from others experiences etc. Feedback from these groups will also help inform future priorities.
- 3.1.5 AEB funding was also delegated to the CA to deliver the national Level 3 Adult Offer programme (also known as Free Courses for Jobs) from 1 April 2021. Only qualifications included on the national list can be funded, and up until 31 March 2022, this was only available for a first level 3 for those aged over 24. However, the DfE have agreed to additional flexibilities, meaning those aged 24+ and unemployed or earning less than the Minimum Wage can access full funding regardless of prior attainment level. The CA has extended this offer further to include those earning less than the Real Living Wage, in line with existing AEB Low Wage thresholds. Added to this, Mayoral Combined Authorities are able to spend up to 20% of their annual budget on additional qualifications and providers have been asked to submit their requests and are currently awaiting results.
- 3.1.6 Covid continues to have a significant affect upon progress as a result of a combination of factors including centres being closed, staff and learner absences through Covid related illness and lack of confidence in learners in returning to centres. However, the council meets regularly with the CA to review progress against the AEB profile and to put plans in place for recovery.

LCR Skills Show

- 3.1.7 The Apprenticeship Support by Be More Team, managed by Halton Borough Council, is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Strategic Investment Fund (SIF) to deliver career inspiration and guidance to Liverpool City Region (LCR) residents, and promote the take up of apprenticeships, vocational training and employment vacancies. The Liverpool City Region Skills Show was held at the Exhibition Centre Liverpool on the 1st and 2nd March 2022 and was attended by 2,568 residents.

The event presented 106 interactive and engaging exhibition stands, with a wide range of local and national employers, colleges, universities, local authorities and training organisations exhibiting across 10 zones.

Visitors were able to 'have a go' at a huge range of exciting, interactive activities to inspire them about a broad range of jobs and career pathways including:

- Planning a Flood Management System;
- Virtual Forklift Operating;
- Construction Safety Training;
- Caring for Animals;
- Crime Scene Evidence Gathering;
- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR);
- Scientific Infection Testing Experiments;
- Mocktail and Patisserie Masterclasses;

- Music Production;
- Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy;
- Brick Laying;
- Midwifery and Childcare

3.1.8 A full evaluation of the Skills Show is being finalised, together with an infographic highlighting the key stats from the event and will be shared with HEP members once available. The event was also captured on video and can be found here <https://youtu.be/FXbyPt7oXak>

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPS) and Strategic Development Fund (SDF)

3.1.9 The Skills for Jobs White Paper published in January 2021 set out proposals that would see employers put at the heart of the skills system. In order to achieve this, the then Secretary of State for Education was looking for Chambers of Commerce locally to corral the voice of employers and collate their views as to what was needed. This would be delivered through employers and colleges working together on a Local Skills Improvement Plan.

3.1.10 The appointment of a new Secretary of State for Education in September 2021 provided the opportunity for Government to rethink the role, focus and organisation of the Local Skills Improvement Plans. They will be developed in partnership between employer representative bodies (ERBs) and colleges, private training providers and universities, focusing on post 18 technical education. They now require the support of a Mayoral Combined Authority before they are signed off by the Department for Education.

3.1.11 The timescales for the rollout of Local Skills Improvement Plans across England are:

- May 2022 – expressions of interest in being the Employer Representative Body in each area will be opened
- July 2022 – appointments of Employer Representative Bodies will be made: guidance on the completion of Local Skills Improvement Plan is expected;
- September 2022 – process of developing Local Skills Improvement Plans begins;
- Summer 2023 – all Local Skills Improvement Plans are expected to be completed.

3.1.12 £55,000 funding has been made available for Mayoral Combined Authorities and LEPs to produce Labour Market Information in 2022/23, which is expected to form the basis of the Local Skills Improvement Plan. It's expected the five Chambers of Commerce in the City Region will put in a submission to act as the Employer Representative Body in LCR.

3.1.13 The SDF is designed to support colleges and providers to improve their facilities and provision to meet the need of employers. This one year fund has £92m available across England and comprises a mixture of capital and revenue, meaning that £1.25m revenue and £1.5m capital is available for each area to:

- Support providers to **upgrade** their facilities, equipment and curriculum to better meet the needs of their local economy;

- enable colleges and other FE providers to **build their overall capacity** to meet local skills priorities, and to drive more effective and efficient use of funds through a more coordinated FE offer;
- support ongoing FE provider quality improvement through **FE workforce training**, developing sector-led approaches to peer-to-peer support, sharing good practice including two-way industry exchanges with FE providers; and
- stimulate employer demand for and investment in skills leading to **more sustainable provision**, including by raising awareness about new technologies and driving the adoption of innovation in local businesses, especially in small medium enterprises.

Submissions must be produced as collaborations from local areas and led by a college. Initial work is under way from the colleges and is expected to focus on the following areas:

- Electric vehicles and green travel;
- Retrofit and modular build
- Automated logistics, linked to Freeport developments.

The closing date for submission was the 13 May 2022.

Skills Bootcamps for the Workforce

3.1.14 The CA has secured £8.1m to deliver Skills Bootcamps in a range of sectors over the next year, after successfully piloting Skills Bootcamps in Digital Skills over the last two years.

3.1.15 Skills Bootcamps provide flexible hands-on courses of up to 16 weeks in duration, which are part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda and Lifetime Skills Guarantee. They aim to help participants find jobs in a range of growing sectors across the Liverpool City Region and help employers to close skills gaps. The programme is funded by the Department for Education and developed locally by the CA, working closely with local employers. The Skills Bootcamps will provide training with content at Level 3 standard or above.

3.1.16 Skills Bootcamps provide training in construction, digital, engineering, green skills, HGV drivers, and rail.



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4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no policy implications associated with this report.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Covid has impacted adversely on the delivery of the adult education budget within the City Region, including Halton's Adult Learning Team. Underperformance may result in funding being clawed back at the end of the current academic year, which then has an impact on budget levels as staff and premises costs still need to be covered.

5.2 Funding for the Apprenticeship Support by Be More Team is set to end in December 2022. There are 6 members of staff in this team.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The LCR Skills Show's main target audience was young people from year 9 onwards. The event provided them with a fantastic opportunity to increase their knowledge and understanding of courses, jobs and careers available in the City Region and the chance to have a go on the various interactive stands.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

There are no implications associated with this report.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

There are no implications associated with this report.

6.4 A Safer Halton

There are no implications associated with this report.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

There are no implications associated with this report.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

In line with an orange book assessment there is no likelihood or impact of this work beyond the team performing the task.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no equality or diversity issues.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.