

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

**DATE:** 16 September 2024

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director Environment &  
Regeneration

**PORTFOLIO:** Employment, Learning and Skills and  
Community

**SUBJECT:** Liverpool City Region Employment & Skills  
Update

**WARD(S)** Boroughwide, Liverpool City Region

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To provide Members with an update on Liverpool City Region (LCR) Employment and Skills matters.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 HBC's Head of Employment, Learning & Skills attends regular meetings with the Combined Authority's (CA) Employment & Skills officers and officers from each of the LCR's respective local authorities. The purpose of the meetings is varied:

- Feeding back from CA meetings with Government departments e.g. DWP and gathering observations from officers on those discussions.
- Consulting with LA officers on proposed policy development and initiatives e.g. The Long-Term Skills Plan.
- Sharing papers for key LCR CA committees e.g. Growth Directors, Employment, Education & Skills Cabinet Board; Employment & Skills Board; and garnering feedback.

3.2 After each meeting, the Head of Employment, Learning & Skills provides a written record to relevant council officers and the Portfolio Holder for Employment, Learning and Skills, Leisure, Community and Culture. If any follow up actions are needed from officers/Portfolio Holder, these are highlighted and requests for updates are given.

3.3 Clearly, the change of Government might result in some pre-planned LCR CA initiatives may not happen. However, the following

information will provide Members with the latest thinking on a range of topics being worked through by the CA and LA officers.

3.4 Proposition for Employment & Skills

As part of the preparations for the new Government, LCR has been developing a proposition, which sets out what could be delivered by the area, based upon input and consideration from CA and LA officers and Members and which reflects the Metro Mayor's manifesto, the CA's emerging Corporate Plan, opportunities and alignment with the priorities of a new Government.

3.5 Relevant to this PPB will be the proposals around Education, Employment & Skills. Key propositions around this element include:

- a reset of employment support
- creation of a local Jobs, Skills & Careers Hub for young people and adults to reflect the Government's plans to merge JobCentre Plus with the National Careers Service, leaving the 'benefits' element within a different area, and based upon need/opportunity rather than the current eligibility model.
- full devolution of post 16 vocational and technical skills provision
- LCR Pathway – the highest quality Technical Education for 16–19-year-olds in LCR matched to the skills needs of employers and business.
- High quality FE facilities through devolution of skills capital.

3.6 In order for the above to be successfully implemented, increased collaboration and connectivity of national government departments around key public service challenges will be essential.

3.7 Long Term Skills Plan

The 10-year Plan will set out the long term skills 'roadway' for the City Region and will be used as a basis to commission future work around skills/employment. Consultation has taken place throughout with a range of key partners including council officers (Employment & Skills leads, Growth Directors, Chief Executives etc), LCR FE colleges/institutions, training providers, Directors of Children's Services and HR leads. A Halton-specific workshop for key stakeholders also took place.

3.8 Draft versions of the Plan have also been shared with the CA's Employment & Skills Board and the Employment, Education & Skills Cabinet Board.

3.9 Currently being worked up is an Implementation Framework with identified 'leads' for relevant areas. The Combined Authority will review the Plan at its meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> September.

- 3.10 The four strategic objectives that the Plan will focus on are:
- SO1 Improving Technical Education outcomes for young people:
  - SO2 Enabling Second chance Learning and help people to get into work:
  - SO3 Developing the Skills that employers need: and
  - SO4 Providing People with the Skills that they need to progress:
- 3.11 The Long-Term Skills Plan will be shared widely once published.
- 3.12 Early Years Sector workforce and provision  
From Summer 2023, the CA, through working in partnership, has convened discussions and activity relating to the Early Years Workforce and provision, designed to support the Early Years sector to sustain, develop, and scale up.
- 3.13 Recruitment and retention have been challenges for Early Years and Childcare settings in LCR and nationally, with some parents finding it difficult to secure accessible, affordable and high quality childcare and some unable to extend working hours as there was not sufficient care available. This was the context *before* the previous Government announced an extension to funded childcare provision in the Budget 2023.
- 3.14 Following this, the CA has been working with Council Early Years leads to facilitate a broader whole system approach to addressing the challenges and capturing the opportunities to support the Sector to develop, sustain and scale up.
- 3.15 Construction Sector priorities  
The delivery of 80,000 new homes across LCR was announced by Steve Rotheram in his Mayoral Manifesto recently, together with the improvement of current housing stock, and the CA is looking at the implications associated with this (e.g. availability of land, construction labour supply etc).
- 3.16 In LCR, we do not have sufficient supply of local labour to deliver on this scheme. And, whilst the provision of construction sector skills is readily available in LCR, quite a number of young people that start on a construction course do not go on to complete it, let alone move into this sector to work. Partners in the City Region, therefore, need to ensure more people who take up construction training, actually complete and go on to work in the sector. Added to this, there is also a huge gender and race imbalance in the sector in LCR.

- 3.17 Construction can be a tough industry to work in as contracts may be short term – and then the workers might be expected to travel to a different location for the next contract. Additionally, early starts and working outdoors can be off-putting.
- 3.18 The CA is leading on a piece of work on construction sector priorities and are engaging with individual LAs, to better understand their priorities. Included in the report will be several good practice case studies, showcasing local authority employment and skills services working in partnership with planning and procurement teams in gaining maximum benefits from local construction projects.
- 3.19 Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) updates  
The National Careers Service is to merge with DWP to create a new national jobs and careers service. This will be available for young people and adults and will not just be a service available for those residents who are on state benefits. A forthcoming White Paper containing full details will be published.
- 3.20 A new ‘youth guarantee’ will also be launched. And a final key priority for DWP will be around skills and health support for its customers.
- 3.21 Further details on the above will be made clearer over the next few months.
- 3.22 Economies for Healthier Lives  
The Liverpool City Region’s Economies for Healthier Lives programme is one of only four programmes across the UK to be approved for funding from the [Health Foundation](#). The purpose of each programme is to explore at a local level how health and wellbeing can be effectively incorporated into local economic strategies and demonstrate how inclusive economies can build healthier communities.  
<https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/economies-for-healthier-lives>
- 3.23 Each programme will also explore ways that employers, and in particular anchor institutions, can create business opportunities and high-quality local jobs in the community and how those jobs can be made more accessible to people with a health condition.
- 3.24 The initiative will continue until December 2024 and a new CA Health Portfolio will be created to aid with future joint working.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None identified at this stage.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The Long Term Skills Plan will be used as a basis to commission future work around skills/employment.

5.2 A number of the initiatives detailed within the main body of the report do not involve new funding allocations; rather, it is an attempt for the CA/LAs to work more collaboratively and smartly in maximising the best skills and employment outcomes for its residents.

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

### **6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

The work of the Economies for Healthier Lives and the forthcoming new skills and health support offer from DWP will support improved health, wellbeing and independence of our residents.

### **6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

The strategic objectives set out in the Long Term Skills Plan for the City Region will support positive steps to build a stronger, sustainable local economy through upskilling and creation of good quality jobs in key and growth sectors.

### **6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

The Long Term Skills Plan and other associated skills and employment initiatives detailed in the main report include providing young people with the right kind of information, advice and guidance needed to make informed choices about their next steps and the support that is available to them.

### **6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

Proposals being put forward by DWP and the CA would see a shift from a targeted model to a more inclusive one, whereby local residents, whether in employment or not, with an identified health condition or not, etc, can access support they need to help improve their access to provision and progress their career.

### **6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future**

None

### **6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

Halton Borough Council is a constituent council of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority; all updates detailed in the main report apply to Halton's community.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 All proposals detailed in the main body of the report will be led by the Combined Authority, who will undertake relevant risk analyses.

Any commissioning would require respective partners to comply, and to undertake internal risk assessments accordingly.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The Combined Authority (and Halton Borough Council) have DWP Disability Confident Leader status and are signed up to the LCR Fair Employment Charter.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None identified.

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

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.