

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

DATE: 21st September 2020

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community
and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Economic Development

SUBJECT: Employment, Learning & Skills Update

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide members with an update on the work of the Employment, Learning & Skills Division.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) **the report be noted; and**
- 2) **The Board considers the information presented and raise any questions of interest or points of clarification following the presentation.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Since March 20th 2020, the staff within the Employment, Learning & Skills Division have been operating a remote system for customers and learners, with all centres currently closed. The staff are in the process of preparing for centres to reopen again and in planning for how delivery to customers and learners will roll out given social distancing measures. As well as the guidance surrounding Covid-19, being core to our delivery going forward, the work of the Division will very much focus on supporting those individuals that have been adversely affected economically by the pandemic and have lost their jobs and/or confidence. Existing programmes are set to continue and, in some cases, shift in priority to support those most in need. For example, Halton People into Jobs will deliver a new DWP funded Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) programme to help people who have been unemployed and in receipt of benefits for at least 13 weeks, to find sustained work.

This report provides an update to the September 2019 ELS PPB update report.

3.1 ESF Ways to Work

3.1.1 The Ways to Work programme has continued to support residents into work, training and self-employment during lockdown. We liaised with local employers to provide paid ILM opportunities. Partnership working has been key in raising awareness of the support available across Halton and a dedicated marketing campaign took place via social media to generate new referrals.

3.1.2 The Ways to Work programme is funded through two separate funding streams:

1.3 funding supports residents aged 16-29yrs old. An extension was agreed to continue the service to December 2020. A further bid has been submitted which is due to go to the ESIF committee this week for approval (if approved 1.3 delivery will finish September 2023).

1.1 funding supports residents aged 30+. Funding is in place to June 2021. A proposal is due to be submitted for National Reserve Funding to extend 1.1 beyond 2021 (if approved 1.1 our delivery will finish September 2022).

As part of the CA's 'ask' of the Government to support the road to recovery, an extension to the Ways to Work programme (£53m) has been requested as part of Build Back Better. The pioneering Ways to Work programme has been running in the City Region since 2016, working with 25,000 people and supporting over 15,000 into work. It provides individual targeted support to unemployed people to help them identify, prepare for, and secure employment opportunities. The programme works closely with local employers and skills providers, aligning support to vacancies and skills shortages. Demand for the programme will increase because of the pandemic, and there is an opportunity to fund its extension so that it can provide immediate support to those who most need it.

3.2 Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Hub

3.2.1 The Employment, Learning & Skills Division has managed the Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Hub on behalf of the City Region for 6 years. However, given the developments at the CA and as part of the Metro Mayor's ambitions, a proposal was made of £4m of Single Investment Fund (SIF) and £5.5m of ESF to fund a new service going forward. The full business case for SIF was approved in October 2019, enabling Halton to continue to deliver the LCR Apprenticeship Hub element of the new contract under an SLA agreement with the CA. The service was then renamed Apprenticeship Support by Be-More. Both the SIF and ESF programme will support over 700 events/outreach activities and generate 1,500 apprenticeship vacancies. To-date 297 events and targeted outreach activities promoting apprenticeships have been

delivered to 12,136 residents, of which 919 were from Halton. So far, over 200 vacancies have been created.

3.2.2 From October 2020 to March 2022, 250 Apprenticeship Awareness theatre productions will be delivered in schools across Liverpool City Region, in addition to two annual Apprenticeship Graduation events and a Skills Show in the summer of 2021.

During the last 4 months, the team have delivered virtual events to JCP claimants and 121-telephone support service to parents and students across the city region to ensure a continuation of the service, which has received significantly positive feedback from both DWP and schools.

3.3 LCR Apprenticeship Growth Plan

3.3.1 The Combined Authority commissioned the Apprenticeship Growth Plan, which ran 2017-2020. During some of this time, the LCR Apprenticeship Hub Board regularly reviewed the action plan within the Growth Plan and reported on progress to the Combined Authority (CA) Employment & Skills Board.

3.3.2 The CA undertook a review of the services it was funding/leading on and the Apprenticeship Hub Board no longer met. An overarching Skills & Apprenticeship Hub, managed by the CA, was created and all policy relating to skills and apprenticeships now sits with the Hub Manager based at the CA. An updated Apprenticeship Growth Plan has not been commissioned. The Apprenticeship Support by Be More Team (as detailed in 3.2) is managed through the Division and continues to report into the CA on a monthly basis.

3.4 DWP Work & Health Programme

3.4.1 The DWP Work and Health Programme went live in November 2017. Halton People into Jobs delivers the programme on a sub-contractor basis to Ingeus.

555 participants have started on the programme that have accessed up to 15 months of support to help remove barriers to work. Since the start of the programme, 168 individuals have been supported into paid employment/self-employment.

3.4.2 In 2019/2020 an internal audit of the programme was conducted which reviewed and tested the adequacy and effectiveness of the controls and processes established by management to mitigate the key risks relating to the programme. A substantial assurance opinion was issued with no action required.

3.4.3 The new DWP funded Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) programme (part of Work and Health Programme) will go live in October 2020 to help people who have been unemployed and in receipt of benefits for at least

13 weeks, to find sustained work. The programme will support 1453 participants between October 2020 and March 2022.

3.5 Merseylink Employment & Skills Performance

Merseylink's Employment and Skills Board has continued to meet remotely during Covid lockdown and progress towards KPIs by Tarmac and Emovis monitored. Discussions have taken place with regard to the KPI for the number of volunteering hours, as post construction the 3000 hours is not realistic. At the last meeting, it was reported that the Catalyst Museum was undergoing refurbishment and it was proposed to use the space previously occupied by the Mersey Gateway Visitor Centre for Catalyst activities. It was agreed that Tarmac would continue discussions with the Mersey Gateway Crossings Board in order to agree a more relevant KPI for this area of work.

3.6 Adult Learning and Devolution

3.6.1 Devolution of the Adult Education Budget has not had a negative impact on the delivery of Adult Learning in Halton. The curriculum offer was reviewed and remained in line with local and Liverpool City Region priorities.

3.6.2 The additional funding for Test and Learn pilot programmes was embraced by the Adult Learning Team and innovative programmes have been delivered.

3.6.3 Funding data returns have been submitted to LCRCA for the devolved AEB allocation and to ESFA for the small funding allocation for continuing and out of borough learners. The Data and Information Manager has participated in LCRCA MIS meetings.

3.6.4 Family Learning

- During Covid-19 lockdown, Family Learning Tutors communicated with parents and delivered activities using the on-line parent platform used by Halton Primary Schools.
- Curriculum tailored to borough need around, grammar, reading and mathematical calculations - linking with the TALK Halton project and the development of the Halton Reading Strategy.
- Mental health provision requested from schools through our 'Youth Connect 5' programme and mental health workshops as schools are seeing a rising need for this within families.

3.6.5 Children Centre Provision

- Part of the Talk Halton project to support in the raising of GLD scores for children at the 2-year assessment point and at the end of Reception. Speech, Language and Communication is a key focus across the borough, lower development and scores at the early stage

is impacted on outcomes at the end of KS2 and at the end of Secondary.

- Successful delivery of tailored provision to support these foci over the last academic year which will be continued through funding for a new Test and Learning Pilot in 2020/21 to support blended English and maths for parents.

3.6.6 Functional Skills – English, maths and ICT

- Successful delivery of English, maths and ICT courses took place in learning centres until March 2020. Learning for individuals with access to equipment and connectivity continued digitally and other learners had the opportunity to continue their learning using textbooks and resources.
- Centre Assessed grades were submitted to the Awarding Body based on assessment outcomes and internal standardisation resulting in confirmation of Calculated Results for each learner submitted. Learners who were not able to achieve the qualification will be given the opportunity to continue their learning in the 2020/21 academic year.

3.6.7 Employability Skills

- Delivery of HEP Award programmes continued to be successful up to March 2020.
- Bespoke courses have been developed and delivered to meet the needs of participants registered on the Work and Health programme.
- Many Independent Learning Providers were awarded contracts by LCRCA to deliver Employability programmes across the Liverpool City Region and has resulted in some duplication of provision.

3.6.8 Test and Learn Pilot programmes

- Successful delivery of the Digital Marketing & Media Test and Learn project linked to developing Coding skills and creating Web pages for small business enterprises, which continued during COVID as an online provision. Due to its success and the Skills strategy needed across the borough and Region we have embedded 'Coding' & 'Web Design' into our curriculum delivery for 2020/21.
- The Engage with Reading Pilot programme was successfully delivered pre-Covid lockdown with 12 volunteer Reading Mentors trained to deliver 1:1 sessions. Due to restrictions during lockdown and to maintain social distancing, the programme was suspended from March 2020. It is proposed to recommence the programme from November 2020 onwards.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- ### 4.1
- The Adult Education Budget is now devolved to the LCR Combined Authority. We are now in year 2 of devolution (1st August 2020) and

funding for Halton has been guaranteed by way of a grant for this 2nd year.

- 4.2 The Combined Authority submitted their 'Build Back Better' ask to Government in July 2020. The report sets out how, with the help of Government, the City Region can recover from the impacts of Covid-19 through a range of interventions and projects. The asks in relation to People Recovery will certainly impact on the work of the Division and it is expected that, should funding be awarded, much of our activity will need to be scaled up very quickly. The full report can be accessed [here](#), with the People Recovery section starting at page 35.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Additional funding has been confirmed for the new JETS programme, which will go live in October 2020. The Division is still waiting on ESF appraisals to be completed to better understand future funding levels for the Division. It is expected that, should the Build Back Better proposal be accepted by Government, the Division would benefit financially from this. Funding would enable a scaled up offer for the Division's services.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Some of the projects within the Build Back Better ask to Government will be to support young people from aged 16 to upskill and gain employment/ apprenticeships. The Apprenticeship Support Team and Ways to Work project already support young people in the borough.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

All of the services offered by the Division, including the Apprenticeship Support Team, exist to deliver on this priority for Halton Borough Council.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Many learners and customers have struggled during Covid as they have not been able to attend centres and benefit from face to face reassurance from staff. Many have reported they have developed mental health issues and it has been even more challenging for our staff to give them the support they need remotely. Working from home has also presented real challenges for some staff and it is very important that we protect the mental health of both staff and customers/learners.

6.4 A Safer Halton

None

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None

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

9.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.