

# Cheshire and Warrington Workforce Recovery Group

## Terms of Reference

### 1. Aims and Objective

The Group will bring together the local authorities, the LEP, Jobcentre Plus and BEIS to provide the leadership and coordination for all our organisations to work together with other key partners to support people across Cheshire and Warrington who have been made redundant or are at risk of redundancy as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.

### 2. Background

We are in unprecedented times and need urgent action to address the enormous redundancy spike that is looming over Cheshire and Warrington. To date we have had relatively low levels of unemployment and most of our programmes of support have been targeted at people who have multiple barriers that prevent them moving into employment.

Whilst the Government has created the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, designed to help businesses retain their staff during the current virus outbreak, there are redundancies currently being made by businesses across the county.

Normally a task force group would be set up for individual cases where large scale redundancies were being proposed. These would normally involve the local authorities, the LEP and Jobcentre Plus working with other local and national agencies as appropriate.

Limited resource capacity means it would not be possible to attend multiple task force groups across the area for countywide bodies and national agencies during the current economic climate. Hence why the Group has been established as part of the approach to do what we can to support people into jobs, to support businesses and to help secure our economy.

The first meeting of the Group is urgent and involves the key core agencies who will need to respond to this emerging issue – other partners will be invited to join the Group as required.

The people who are likely to be made redundant over the next year will have very different characteristics, many will have never been unemployed before.

Our data and labour market analysis highlights other additional challenges:

- Our young people are dealing with a 74% reduction in 16-18 apprenticeship starts this April compared to last
- Based on historic data, 54% of 18 year olds will be seeking a job or an apprenticeship this summer, but those opportunities will probably not be there – this amounts to 10,000 18 year olds 'at risk' in Cheshire and Warrington as well as a further 1,400 16 year olds who have historically not progressed to post-16 education.
- We currently have 109,300 furloughed people with an estimate that 22% of employers will make redundancies by the end of July.

- We also have 27,000 self-employed people on income support who will need support to return to work or restart their businesses.

As well as supporting our residents to get back into work, businesses will need the skills to lead the recovery and create the new jobs for the future.

Making redundancies is challenging and traumatic for everyone involved. We want to avoid as many of our residents becoming long-term unemployed. The Group will therefore also focus on early action to support those adults at risk of redundancy as well as our young people who will be leaving school this summer. Establishing a Cheshire and Warrington-wide Group will be the vehicle to support Jobcentre Plus's Rapid Response Service that provides advice and support through its network of partners. It will help to focus and co-ordinate the various key partners and establish action plans to address the effects of job losses on individuals by helping people move rapidly into alternative employment.

Getting the right information in a timely manner is essential as is effectively and efficiently deploying partner agency resource. Hence establishing a single Cheshire and Warrington-wide Group that can bring together the partners preventing duplication and then orchestrating the services.

The Group will be informed by data and intelligence from a range of sources including:

- The LEP's Cell 'Watch List' that is monitoring labour demand issues including those Cheshire and Warrington based firms within high-risk sectors of the economy.
- The LEP's Cell Economic Dashboard that is monitoring labour supply issues
- The Local Industrial Strategy which has been informed by a wealth of information about the underlying strengths and weaknesses of the local economy - both sectors and places. This longer-term direction remains intact. Therefore, in terms of labour market dynamics and intelligence this provides a longer-term richness to the approach. For example, large scale redundancies in firms within one of the Local Industrial Strategy's priority growth sectors located in a priority growth settlement is particularly problematic for the longer-term economic health of the subregion. Where-as, redundancies in a firm outside these priority sectors and in a place that is not a priority growth settlement may be regrettable but may not have a significant effect upon the longer terms direction of the economy.
- The Cheshire and Warrington Data and Labour Market Steering Group that has commissioned a series of reports including on the adult workforce, young people the way employers' demand for skills has changed in response to Covid-19 and the supply of skills training.

The Group will not include work with the long-term unemployed or economically inactive people – this will remain the remit of the Into Work Board. However, there may be scope to flex some of the support for long-term unemployed people in a way that it is relevant to people whose jobs have recently been made redundant.

### 3. **Approach**

The Local Authorities, the LEP and Jobcentre Plus, will be doing all they can in the coming months to support those employers and employees affected by the impact that COVID-19 will have on the local economy. The collaborative partnership working will ensure appropriate and timely support is put in place.

We will need to consider support for:

- Those whose jobs have been made redundant
- Those who have been furloughed or who are currently still working but who are at risk of redundancy
- The self employed who have had to close their businesses during the lockdown and unlikely to restart their businesses without some support
- Young people who are planning to leave school, college, or university this summer
- Young people aged 18-24-years old

Local authorities will bring local issues to the Group to initiate the co-ordinated support needed.

The Group will support the co-ordination of the services to help to redeploy, retrain, reskill, upskill, and signpost people to new employment opportunities ensuring support is available to the individuals affected and their families. The Group will ensure that a menu of support would be made available to the employer and its employees. It will also establish if the employer will be allocating funding to support its employees.

These services will address the effects of job losses on individuals and on the local community by helping people move rapidly into alternative employment hopefully without the need to claim welfare benefits.

### **3.1 Redundant Workers**

After an employer has submitted the HR1 form to the Insolvency Service - Redundancy Payments Service, details are passed to Jobcentre Plus to make the initial contact. This helps to establish:

- The number of employees at risk
- When the potential redundancies could impact and whether they will be phased
- Employee profiles - gender, age, residency, occupations, terms & conditions, qualifications, terms future employment expectations / aspirations etc
- Whether Apprentices are in scope
- The timeline for consultation and Trade Unions involved
- How the employer plans to support staff e.g. are existing Agencies used or is the intention to appoint an external Agency
- Whether Jobcentre Plus's Rapid Response Service (RRS), would help in respect of the employer and its employees. RRS support is available through the notice period and for 13 weeks after, irrespective of whether a claim for benefit is made.

The National Careers Service (NCS) will be used alongside Jobcentre Plus's services to provide information, advice and guidance on all aspects of work and learning; practical help in

applying for a new job, preparing CV's and job applications, coaching to prepare for interviews, and help to find suitable re-training courses. Qualified careers advisers will help those looking for a change of career. The NCS offer will incorporate the recently launched Redundancy and Recruitment Triage service.

On 8 July the Chancellor announced a package of support including the following for unemployed people:

- **Enhanced work search support** – The government will provide £895 million to enhance work search support by doubling the number of work coaches in Jobcentre Plus before the end of the financial year across Great Britain.
- **Expansion of the Work and Health Programme** – The government will provide up to £95 million this year to expand the scope of the Work and Health Programme in Great Britain to introduce additional voluntary support in the autumn for those on benefits that have been unemployed for more than 3 months. This expansion will have no impact on the existing provision for those with illnesses or disabilities in England and Wales.
- **Job finding support service** – The government will provide £40 million to fund private sector capacity to introduce a job finding support service in Great Britain in the autumn. This online, one-to-one service will help those who have been unemployed for less than three months increase their chances of finding employment.
- **Flexible Support Fund** – The government will increase the funding for the Flexible Support Fund by £150 million in Great Britain, including to increase the capacity of the Rapid Response Service. It will also provide local support to claimants by removing barriers to work such as travel expenses for attending interviews.
- **New funding for sector-based work academies** – The government will provide an additional £17 million this year to triple the number of sector-based work academy placements in England in order to provide vocational training and guaranteed interviews for more people, helping them gain the skills needed for the jobs available in their local area.

Further details about how this support will be aligned to local plans and work with local partners will be available over the next few weeks.

There are also a number of other programmes that are available in Cheshire and Warrington to support adults who have been made redundant to move into work. The Group will need to identify the key support programmes that need to be coordinated and any gaps in service. Current programmes include support to develop generic employability skills, including but not limited to personal presentation skills, interview skills, basic digital, as well as relevant information, advice and guidance, and interventions to ensure that the training opportunities are targeted at up-skilling or re-skilling participants to improve their employment opportunities.

The Group will need to consider the impact on Cheshire and Warrington residents of redundancies announced in adjacent geographical areas where significant numbers of our residents work.

### **3.2 Furloughed Workers or Those Currently in Work At Risk of Redundancy**

There are a number of other programmes that are available in Cheshire and Warrington to adults at risk of redundancy to develop the skills they need to remain with their current employer and enable the employer to adopt new technologies and/or new business models post Covid-19. If enabled to survive and grow these are the businesses that will create the jobs of the future.

There are also programmes to enable people currently employed or on furlough to develop skills that enable them to move to alternative employment. Programmes include the recently launched £30 million Accelerate retraining and upskilling programme for employed people as well as other programmes to job match as well as support the development of generic employability skills, including but not limited to, personal presentation skills, interview skills, basic digital as well as relevant information, advice and guidance, and interventions to ensure that the training opportunities are targeted at up-skilling or re-skilling participants to improve their employment opportunities and convert into different types of job.

### **3.3 Young People Leaving School or University This Summer**

Our secondary schools are very keen to work with Pledge partners to develop a programme of support for young people leaving school this year. Much of the support will need to be delivered online by a range of partners, building on the Pledge's existing offer. It would include:

- Jobs fairs – inspiring and informing young people, parents and carers and teachers about new technologies and career opportunities
- More work experience and internships for young people – making them aware of the opportunities
- Working with employers, particularly smaller businesses to make them more aware of the benefits of employing apprentices and offer work experience/internships more generally
- Recruitment and induction of apprentices
- Encouraging larger companies to transfer their apprenticeship levy to smaller businesses
- Job matching

Mechanisms that already exist where Pledge partners work together with local schools to facilitate various programme of support for young people could be extended to include a targeted programme of support for all our young people who will be leaving school this summer.

Where young people are being encouraged to continue their education, the Group will need to understand the costs associated with increased numbers staying in school and moving into further and/or higher education.

Work is also needed with the University of Chester and other HE providers to develop opportunities for graduates and post grads.

### 3.4 Young People Aged 18 to 24

The Chancellor has recently announced a package of support much of which is specifically focused on 18 to 24-year old young people. Further details of how these announcements will be operationalised are expected over the next few weeks. The announcements include:

- **Kickstart Scheme** – the government will introduce a new Kickstart Scheme in Great Britain, a £2 billion fund to create hundreds of thousands of high quality 6-month work placements aimed at those aged 16-24 who are on Universal Credit and are deemed to be at risk of long-term unemployment. Funding available for each job will cover 100% of the relevant National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week, plus the associated employer National Insurance contributions and employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions.
- **New funding for National Careers Service** – The government will provide an additional £32 million funding over the next 2 years for the National Careers Service so that 269,000 more people in England can receive personalised advice on training and work.
- **High quality traineeships for young people** – The government will provide an additional £111 million this year for traineeships in England, to fund high quality work placements and training for 16-24 year olds. This funding is enough to triple participation in traineeships. For the first time ever, the government will fund employers who provide trainees with work experience, at a rate of £1,000 per trainee. The government will improve provision and expand eligibility for traineeships to those with Level 3 qualifications and below, to ensure that more young people have access to high quality training.
- **Payments for employers who hire new apprentices** – The government will introduce a new payment of £2,000 to employers in England for each new apprentice they hire aged under 25, and a £1,500 payment for each new apprentice they hire aged 25 and over, from 1st August 2020 to 31st January 2021. These payments will be in addition to the existing £1,000 payment the government already provides for new 16-18 year-old apprentices, and those aged under 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan – where that applies.
- **High value courses for school and college leavers** – The government will provide £101 million for the 2020-21 academic year to give all 18-19 year olds in England the opportunity to study targeted high value Level 2 and 3 courses when there are not employment opportunities available to them.
- **Expanded Youth Offer** – The government will expand and increase the intensive support offered by DWP in Great Britain to young jobseekers, to include all those aged 18-24 in the Intensive Work Search group in Universal Credit.

### 3.5 Self Employed People Needing to Restart Their Businesses

Nearly seventy percent of self-employed people in Cheshire and Warrington have currently closed their businesses during the lockdown. When they restart, they may need support including new skills to develop new business models and different ways of delivering their goods and services – including online. With appropriate leadership, management and technical skills these businesses also have the potential to grow and create more jobs for the future.

Key partners would be invited to come together to develop a coherent offer of support.

#### **4. Role**

The key roles and responsibilities of this Group can be summarised as follows:

- Bring together all relevant agencies and partners to have an oversight of delivery of agreed services and monitoring the use of resources through ensuring the various services are aligned and complementary
- Ensure we have a clear package of support that is easy to access and is updated regularly as further Government announcements are made
- Identify any gaps in support and identify potential solutions to fill the gaps as effectively as possible. If solutions are not available locally escalate the issues to central Government Departments/Ministers
- Promote partnership working and align the operational delivery priorities
- Provide updates on delivery and outcomes from individual redundancy situations
- Local intelligence will be provided by partners and any interventions or joint working must use a methodology which is open, fair and transparent
- Debate issues, promote and share good practice and to inform of on-going concerns, issues and act as a conduit to inform and work with national government
- Establish and maintain appropriate communications with all partners through established infrastructure and networking arrangements.

#### **5. Membership**

Initial membership for Group will be drawn from representatives of the:

- Cheshire East Council
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- Cheshire and Warrington LEP
- Chair of the In To Work Board
- Jobcentre Plus
- BEIS

The Group's inaugural meeting will be chaired by Andy Farrall.

Membership of the Group will remain flexible to allow the co-option of other relevant expertise as and when required for the duration of the life of the Group. All members should be:

- Empowered to make decisions on behalf of their organisation
- Have a good understanding of the economic context in the local area
- Understand local investment priorities and have knowledge of the local conditions and needs that meet the priorities for the local labour market
- Work collectively to identify solutions or innovative ways to work in collaboration to benefit employers and employees affected by redundancy situations
- Offer analytical input to the issues under discussion
- Access a wider network for advice on specific issues.

## **6. Communications and Marketing - A Single Communications Hub**

Often missed out of such exercises is telling people about what is happening and what is being achieved and using early adopters / users of the joined-up approach as promotional tools.

Most importantly, however, is the large number of agencies involved and the confusion for a business or individual in navigating such a complex system at an uncertain / confusing time – the notion of a single comms hub again becomes critical.

## **7. Governance**

The Group will report to the Economy Recovery and Renewal Cell and will provide updates to the Leaders and Chief Executive Officers Groups, the Employers' Skills and Education Board and the Into Work Board.

## **8. Meeting Arrangements**

The Group's meetings will initially take place on a weekly basis. Meeting dates for will be provided in advance. Matters requiring attention in between meetings will be dealt with by written communication. The secretariat for the Group will initially be the LEP, to be reviewed by the Group.