**NOTE OF EMPLOYERS’ SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 16 MARCH 2022**

**The main purpose of the meeting was for Members to:**

* Review key developments since their last meeting on 16 February (including the Government review of Post 16 qualifications at Level 2 and below) and respond to any issues raised during meetings of key groups held since last Board meeting
* Reflect on the discussion at the last Employers’ Skills and Education Board with Alice Choi, Chair of the LEP’s Growth Board on how the Employers’ Skills and Education Board and the Growth Board might work together more effectively
* Receive an update from Colin Billingsley (Jobcentre Plus) about planned work with long-term unemployed people in Crewe, Ellesmere Port and Warrington and consider what more Members could do to support the work
* Receive an overview of the work of the Hartree National Centre for Digital Innovation and their Industrial Digitalisation Accelerator
* Review progress on Local Growth Fund skills investments including feedback from Members who support each investment

**KEY POINTS DISCUSSED**

**1. Welcome, declarations of interest, introductions with members sharing information on any key developments since the last meeting** **on 16 February**

* Kath welcomed everyone to the meeting in particular, Colin Billingsley (Jobcentre Plus) and Duncan Sime (Hartree Centre)
* List of attendees and apologies at Annex A
* There were no additional declarations of interest.

**2 Note of last meeting and outstanding actions**

* The note of the last meeting was approved, and the updated action list was reviewed.

**3. Feedback from key meetings/activities since last Employers’ Skills and Education Board**

* Members noted the list of meetings that have taken place since the last Employers’ Skills and Education Board meeting

3.1 **LEP Board**

* Kath Mackay referenced the LEP Chief Executive’s report to the February Board meeting and noted that the last LEP Board had discussed in some detail the Levelling Up White Paper and the announcement of the Innovation Accelerator. Kath also noted the approval of the second Life Sciences Fund and Clare Hayward’s regular meetings with Andy Burnham where they are exploring closer links between Manchester and Cheshire and Warrington.

3.2 **Accelerate**

* Kurt reported on some key aspects of delivery to date:
  + 609 participants had been engaged in the programme by mid-February 2022 with 1,000 individuals on courses. The revised target number of participants is unlikely to be met.
  + 700 of the individuals had been 100% funded and had attended mainly business and digital courses. Participants that had been part-funded had been particularly interested in well-being courses.
  + Four training providers provided a third of the training. Typical training costs were between £2,855 and £55. Active marketing has now been suspended and is reliant on promotion by training providers and via the website.
* Kurt will share the report on Accelerate, initial lessons learnt and the expected final position on numbers of participants - **ACTION KURT**
* Next Employers’ Skills and Education Board to include 15 minutes to focus on lessons learnt - **ACTION PAT JACKSON**

**3.3 Digital Skills Partnership**

* In the absence of Nicola Dunbar, Sarah Williams provided an update on the Digital Skills Partnership.

3.4 **Pledge**

* It was noted that, as discussed at the last Employers’ Skills and Education Board, an expression of interest in accelerating the roll-out of the Careers Hub had been submitted to the Careers and Enterprise Company.

3.5 **Institute of Technology and Skills Accelerator**

* Dhesi was not present at the meeting – Pat Jackson was asked to contact Dhesi for an update that could be shared with Members – **ACTION PAT JACKSON**

**3.6 Skills Bootcamps**

* Pat reported that the Department for Education had not yet provided a response to the Cheshire and Warrington proposal for a skills bootcamp programme. Pat will inform Members as soon as a response is received.
* It was noted that if the Cheshire and Warrington proposal is accepted, an offer letter might be issued by the Department for Education before Easter with a request for a quick response. Members agreed that, if timing was tight, Kath Mackay could have delegated authority to agree for the offer letter to be signed if appropriate.

4. **Working with Long-term Unemployed People**

* Colin Billingsley (DWP) provided an update on the plans to pilot work with longer-term unemployed people in Warrington, Crewe and Ellesmere Port. Colin noted that 1800 people are on Universal Credit and seeking work and 200 people are on Job Seekers Allowance in Warrington, Crewe and Ellesmere Port. This group of 2,000 people is being segmented in terms of gender, age, health, residency and types of jobs they are seeking.
* The aim is to help the 2,000 people into work or to move closer to work by doing something different with/for these people – with Jobcentres working collaboratively with local partners. An initial meeting has already taken place with Journey First in Warrington and Colin is also keen to work with local employers to see if they are willing to help longer-term unemployed people into work – possibly modifying their recruitment process and providing in work support (particularly in the early weeks of starting work).
* This different approach to working with longer-term unemployed people in Warrington, Crewe and Ellesmere Port is not costing anything extra – it is about doing things differently and achieving better value for money and learning the lessons from Kickstart. The new approach will be run over the next 12 months and Colin agreed to keep the Employers’ Skills and Education Board informed of progress.
* Colin confirmed that under the recently announced ‘Ways to Work’ approach unemployed people will be given 1 month to find a job in the sector they prefer but if this is not successful, they will be required to look at jobs in other sectors.
* In response to questions about the outcomes from Kickstart, Colin agreed to share details of the numbers of Kickstarters who moved into work. **ACTION COLIN**

5. **Hartree – An overview of the work of the Hartree National Centre for Digital Innovation and their Industrial Digitalisation Accelerator**

* Duncan Sime provided an overview of the work of the Hartree Centre and their Industrial Digitalisation Accelerator.

6. **Report from Task and Finish Group on Impact**

* Kath Mackay noted the conclusions of the task and finish group that had met on 23 February to review impact measures.
* Kath reported that the task and finish group had stressed the need to be ambitious and adopt a whole system approach – recognising the need to work in partnership with others and to be clear about ‘what good looks like’.
* Members welcomed the report back and asked for further work to be done on ‘how’ the outcomes would be achieved. **ACTION PAT JACKSON AND KATH MACKAY**
* Members also agreed to the proposal to bring together key stakeholders including young people – possibly in a summit, to explore how they could help each other to address the key challenges identified in the refreshed Skills Report and achieve outcomes.
* Members also agreed the need to consider progression (into work, higher level skills and higher quality jobs) as well as educational attainment.
* Members also warned about the danger of displaying data in ways that mask specific issues – e.g., pockets of deprivation.

**7. LEP’s Growth Board**

* Members reflected on the last Employers’ Skills and Education Board meeting with Alice Choi, Chair of the LEP’s Growth Board and the subsequent discussion between Kath and Alice to explore how theEmployers’ Skills and Education Board and the Growth Board might work together more effectively. Members noted that work with Alice and the Growth Board would be ongoing.

**8. Local Growth Fund Skills Investments**

* Sarah Williams shared a series of slides that provided an update on progress to date.

9. **Any Other Business and Date of Next Meetings**

* **Date of next meeting** 13 April 2022
* Jo Baker drew Members’ attention to Astra Zeneca’s forthcoming hackathon – further detailed will be circulated **ACTION JO AND PAT – done**
* Lucy Liang informed Members about the opportunity to engage with the University of Chester business school – further details to be shared – **ACTION LUCY AND PAT – done**
* Julia Teale reported on the plans for the next World Skills competition and encouraged Members to consider engaging with the competition – **ACTION ALL MEMBERS**
* Pat reported that the Data and Labour Market Steering Group have commissioned a ‘light touch’ evaluation to take stock of how the data and intelligence produced to date has been use, what has worked well and where improvements could be made.
* Members noted the planned consultation by the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission
* Items for April agenda – to include a longer session on impacts and Accelerate

**EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD MEETING ON 16 MARCH 2022 Annex A**

The following members of the Employers’ Skills and Education Board attended the meeting:

* \*Kath Mackay - Chair
* Jo Baker (representing Kim Hardman - Astra Zeneca)
* Julia Teale Mid Cheshire Health Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
* \*Lucy Liang (AUE Ltd)
* Tim Smith representing \*Eleanor Blackburn (Warrington Borough Council)
* \*Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
* \*Cllr James Nicholas (Cheshire East)
* \*Clare Latham and Matthew Smith (Cheshire West and Chester)
* Kurt Allman (University of Chester)
* Ben Longworth (BAE Systems)
* Maggie Chen
* Pat Jackson (LEP) \*With voting rights

**Apologies**

* \*Nicola Dunbar (Deputy Chair)
* Nicola Johnson (Bentley Motors)
* Kim Hardman (Astra Zeneca)
* Sarah Hopkinson (Engie)
* Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)
* Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber)
* Dhesi (Kevin Hutchinson (SISK)
* Cheshire College South and West – representing the training providers)
* \*Bill Carr (Carpe Diem)

**Also attending**

* Colin Billingsley (Jobcentre Plus/DWP)
* Duncan Sime (Hartree)
* Ian Brooks
* Sarah Williams, for specific agenda items

**Papers copied to**:

* Trevor Brocklebank (Deputy Chair of LEP)
* Martin Wood (Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy)
* Jamie Zucker (DfE)
* Clare Cassidy (DfE)
* Mike McLouglin (DfE)
* Peter Skates (Cheshire East Council)
* Kirstie Simpson (University of Chester)
* Nicola Said (LEP)
* Joe Manning (LEP)
* Andy Devaney (LEP)
* Sarah Williams (LEP) and Trevor Langston (LEP)
* Andrew Bridge and Dave Rowlands (CITB)