

**Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership
LEP Board Paper agenda item 6b**

Report title: People Leadership Group / Skills Advisory Panel Update

Date: 6 July 2020

Purpose: This paper is for noting

Link to LIS:

Inclusive Growth		Clean growth		
Energy	Engineering		Digital	
Ideas/ Innovation	People/Skills	Infrastructure	Bus. Environment	Places

Timing: Summer 2020

Financial Impact: None

Decisions requested: None

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Summary

- 1.1 People Leadership Group / Skills Advisory Panel ('SAP') activity has significantly increased over spring / summer 2020, as the emerging impact of COVID 19 has played through the economy, and services have been forced to shift delivery models and approaches. With unemployment across the entire Heart of the South West having doubled on average during the past three months, and all education and further/ higher education capacity either in lockdown or shifted to digital approaches, core people team and projects have been forced to refocus and renew activity, with an emphasis on capturing people led intelligence, shifting delivery patterns in existing provision, and starting / accelerating new workstreams with Government and other partners.
- 1.2 On a day to day basis, the LEP's People capacity has been split between continuing and adapting business as normal, with a range of projects and programmes already underway, and seeking to work with Departments and partner around emerging recovery and other activity areas. This has include additional policy activity with DfE, revised delivery approaches

for the Careers Hub and Digital Skills Partnership (and tis projects), and a renewed focus on expenditure and delivery amongst EU and centrally funded skills and training provision

1.3 A brief update on each of the People Group's Core projects / workstrands is set out below for information:

- **Skills Advisory Panel** – The Skills Advisory Panel / SAP Programme continued to develop through the spring / summer period, as DfE sought to accelerate its intelligence gathering and bring forward new responsibilities for the partnership. The SAPs first year work programme was completed in March 2020, including the establishment of the SAP partnership itself, and the gathering and publication of the HotSW's initial evidence base, a 120-page green paper style report. Progress was subject to a formal review by DfE in early March, with positive feedback received both around the SAPs governance arrangement and the depth of evidence marshalled. In response. DfE formally extended SAP funding for a further year in May 2020, with an additional grant of £75,000 towards commissioning of the SAPs evidence base, related labour market tools and employment / renewal of Exeter university as our research partner.

The SAP also took forward in May 2020 its first two deep dive research projects into the Future of Work and Social Mobility. The Future of Work study, focused on likely changes around skills, workplaces, demographics and psychology over the next 10-20 years within the workplace, is currently in the process of undertaking focus group activity with businesses and wider research partners on the topic, whilst the social mobility study is due to start shortly, seeking to engage with the emerging social mobility panel / taskforce that the LEP has been seeking to establish. Deep dive outcomes will be published in July / August.

At a national level, Government also revised and strengthen the role of the SAPs in March 2020, asking each area to prepare a Skills Strategy document for publication before March 2021. Early work is currently ongoing around this document, with the intention to take forward formal consultation and strategy development over the autumn. This also aligns with ongoing work around recovery, with the intention from DfE that the SAP recovery plan will set out relevant priorities for local expenditure over the next 3-5 years.

- **Departmental and National Engagement** – Alongside SAP development, Government and national partners have been working closely with the HotSW's People team over the past three months on related policy development and advice. This has included joint work around the LEP Network's national policy position on recovery activity (which the HotSW and Cheshire LEP were both closely involved in the drafting of), contributing to ongoing work around HMT's Green book Review, joint work with DfE around the development of the National Skills Recovery Package and related programmes linked to the National Retraining Scheme, and work with DWP about supporting individuals furthest from the market. As aa result, the LEP's people team is currently in discussion with Department colleagues around two new programmes (covering disability and Digital Skills) and with an expectation that further project will be bought forward in the next three weeks.
- **Careers Hub** – Despite the disruptions to direct schools' engagement activity has continued at pace around the Careers Hub, completing its second year of full activity in

June 2020. This included an successful extension of its services to cover 120 schools and colleges in year (a growth of 40), successful achievement of a 4.0 target score for local Gatsby benchmarks, and some of the highest levels of performance in the country around levels of work experience within project schools and around employer engagement. The Hub also launched and expanded its Cornerstone employer programme in year, with 12 regionally and nationally important employers engaged to support enhanced CIAG activity across the area, and also wider national ambitions around business education partnership and extending a meaningful career offer to all.

Following the success of the Careers Hub, the Careers Enterprise Company extended an offer to the HotSW in May 2020 to expand the existing hub to cover all mainstream secondary schools and colleges in 2020/21. Following LEP and Local Authority agreement to match the provision offered, the Careers Hub is due to begin this extension programme from September. As a result, the Hub will also become the UK's largest such network, with the HotSW the first area to reach 100% coverage, a significant achievement given both the area's relative size and diversity of education offer.

- **Digital Skills Partnership, including the Digital Skills Innovation Fund activity** – The Digital Skills Partnership continued to develop and deliver on its core offer and functions over the summer, bringing together its 50 partner organisations and accelerating delivery of both existing and new projects linked to digital skills. This included the renewal and reshaping of the Bounce Back Digital programme, with 147 business access the programme in a three week period, and a further 293 signed up for additional activity); ongoing development of the area's NESTA EdTech Challenge programme, working closely with South Devon College; finalisation of YTKO's Digital Construction bid to the European Social Fund; finalisation of a digital careers support programme working with DCMS and the Careers Hub; and support for the development and eventual approval of the recent FE digital capital bid from the HotSW's colleges.

In addition to existing activity, the DSP's Programme Manager has also been heavily involved in the development of new programme and projects over the past 12 weeks, with a significant amount of new activity now likely to launch during the autumn. This includes additional digital skills pilot programmes from DfE; new free business support and individual training provision via DCMS's Digital Boost programme and a new free offer put forward via Coursera; and a further round of bounce back digital provision to be supported by the LEP and Growth Hub.

Given the linkages to the activity of the Business Leadership Group from the latter programme, additional information on the DSIF / Bounce Back Digital Programme has also been included in that update.

- **European Social Fund Delivery and Appraisal** – Work continued around the allocation and delivery of the HotSW's ESF programme over the spring/ summer period. As of June 2020, the area's allocation had been nominal spent, with around £30 of the total £44m subject to contract, and a further £15m either in appraisal or under negotiation with existing delivery partners. This includes £12m of provision being hosted by Devon County Council, Somerset County Council and Plymouth City Council around NEETs, adult skills, health and social care training and wider support for career advice and business

workforce planning. In addition, a further £10m of contract extensions were agreed for existing projects hosted by the ESFA and Big Lottery (working with CSW, SERCO and PETROC College) around workforce support and redundancy, NEET prevention and transition to adulthood, and support for community grants and third sector provision.

Subject to approval of final projects, the HotSW ESF allocation will have supported in the region of 25,000 individuals to train and join new opportunities across the programme by 2023.

- **Communications and Redundancy / Redeployment Activity** – Alongside project and policy activity, the People Group / SAP Secretariat sought to enhance the LEP's communication and information services over the summer period, both in support of emerging redundancy and redeployment activity and to reinforce the LEPs core offer. This included the development and launch of the HotSW Job Launch Pad in May 2020, bringing together all current skills and employment information and advice services into a single web area for the HotSW, as well as the roll out of virtual careers fair and other job based activities. In addition to the comms launch, the People core team has also been heavily engaged in large scale closure and redundancy activity, in conjunction with district and city / unitary local teams, and DWP, JCP and Advisa colleagues on the national side.

This resource and approach will further evolve over the autumn, with the intention that it becomes a core part of the local offer around skills and employment over the next year. Initial work with the Growth Hub is also ongoing about how best to provide a single face to business, learners and providers around LEP support and comms, with additional integration anticipated as the resource evolves.