

Project on Place Based Employment and Skills Commissioning

Purpose of report

For discussion and approval.

Summary

The LGA's employment and skills work is led jointly by this Board and the People and Places Board. This project was commissioned by the Boards and a final output is appended.

Recommendation

That Board Members:

1. Reflect on the content of the report - case studies, challenges, and learning – and approve it for publication.
2. May wish to consider this output could be used to help the sector more generally particularly in light of rising employment and skills challenges as a result of Covid-19 will require more local collaboration.

Action

Officers to take on board members comments.

Contact officer: Jasbir Jhas
Position: Senior Adviser
Phone no: 0207 664 3114
Email: jasbir.jhas@local.gov.uk

Project on Place Based Employment and Skills Commissioning

Background

1. Last year, the Boards asked officers to enhance our employment and skills work. Since much of our employment and skills work has had a lobbying focus, Members agreed an improvement support offer should be developed.
2. Shared Intelligence were commissioned to deliver this support. It involved eight councils and combined authorities working with local partners to identify and collaborate on a specific skills or employment issue (see below for a list). The project involved bespoke local support and four action learning sessions bringing areas together nationally. The project is complete. A final report is appended for discussion and approval.

Area	Theme
Bristol	Support SMEs in deprived areas to develop skills of local workforce.
Essex	Bring partners together to develop a pipeline of skills for future development / expansion (hospital, science park, housing) through an M11 strategic growth corridor / strategic skills concordat.
Haringey	Maximising employment outcomes for Haringey residents facing health barriers to work
Nottinghamshire ON HOLD	Bring partners together to more effectively support and coordinate support those furthest from work secure and sustain work.
Reading	Bring learning institutions together to strategically plan how adult learning spend can address poor / target low skills.
South Ribble	Map mental health challenges in wards against education and skills pathways. Share best practice across the borough and partners.
Surrey	Identify how best public and private can collaborate on hard to reach groups through better use of existing resources.
West Yorkshire Combined Authority	Support steps to create a regional blueprint for coordinating skills and Health, as part of wider CA Skills Commission priorities.

3. The report captures, through case studies, support provided to the local areas during the project. This was varied and included the supplier providing external facilitation at stakeholder meetings convened by the council / CA, providing national and local data or best practice from other areas to help address an issue locally. All areas found the local support very valuable and of added value. The case studies demonstrate the significant shared commitment of councils, combined authorities and local partners to collaborate.
4. In addition, both the participating areas and the LGA also found real value in areas coming through the action learning sets to discuss their issues and share learning.
5. Learning from the project is highlighted below and the report goes on to suggest actions for local and national government.

- 5.1. **Flexible place-based funding and more local decisions are required.** Funding and programmes are time-limited, fragmented, inflexible and centralised. Councils and combined authorities work together, and across a wide range of partners such as LEPs, health and employers to find solutions, but it is more time consuming and resource intensive. By gaining more flexibility in funding and allowing local democratic and accountable decision-making, efficiencies can be gained, and needs met more appropriately.
- 5.2. **Councils/CAs convening role.** Partnership work is challenging at local, regional and national level. Effective systems leadership is essential, and it takes ‘anchor people’ to lead partners through the process.
- 5.3. **Breaking the problem down.** Focusing on skills and labour market challenges specific to the locality, and ensuring it is underpinned by data can reinvigorate multi-agency partnerships and give a renewed purpose.
- 5.4. **Better mechanisms for data sharing must feature in any new employment and skills system.** Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) is essential to ensuring funding and resources are used on the right projects and priorities and that this data can be shared in a way which supports all partners.
- 5.5. **Capacity / capability for strategic planning for skills varies greatly.** The resource available at a local level for employment and skills is a reflection of the reducing budgets local government has faced over the last decade. The challenge now is the anticipated impact from a post-COVID-19 spike in unemployment, which is likely to require even greater investment.

6. Members are asked to comment on the report and approve it for publication.

Next steps

7. The findings from this project will be developed into a web page and shared with the rest of the sector and other stakeholders. As Covid-19 makes collaboration essential, Members may wish to explore the option of further improvement support.

Financial implications

8. To be covered through the existing budget.

Implications for Wales

9. Skills and employment are devolved matters. The LGA is liaising with WLGA on local involvement on skills and jobs recovery.