**Cheshire West and Chester Council Skills and Employment Service**

**Strategy and Action Plan**

**2020 – 2024**

*Supporting People to Progress in Life and Work*

**Index**

**1 Foreword 3**

**2 Context Setting 7**

**3 Executive Summary 10**

**4 Strategic Priorities 12**

**5 Governance structure 18**

**6 Action plan 20**

**Appendices;**

1. **Policy Context 24**
2. **Borough Profile 26**
3. **Stakeholders Engagement 28**

**1 Foreword**

Historically Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) has performed relatively well as a borough, with a number of strong businesses, low levels of unemployment and high levels of productivity.

The challenge has been however, to ensure that all local people feel that they can contribute to and benefit from our thriving economy.

We have widening inequality in life chances in some significant areas of the borough. For example, the average gross weekly wage in CW&C is slightly lower than the national average and two neighbourhoods in the borough are ranked in the 2% most deprived in England. We have significant differences in wellbeing indicators including health, income and longevity between different wards in the borough separated by only a few miles, clearly demonstrating that the wealth experienced locally is not felt by all. For example, 9.1% of residents in the Central and Grange ward are living in bad or very bad health compared to 4.4% of residents living in the Strawberry Ward[[1]](#footnote-1).

Focusing on employment, there are a sizeable number of residents in receipt of Universal Credit, with many experiencing mental health and behavioural conditions and that despite best efforts this number has remained static over time. There are 23.3% of residents earning below the Local Living Wage[[2]](#footnote-2), with many employed on part-time (34 %)[[3]](#footnote-3) or unsecure contracts. We need to continue to strive towards ensuring ***all residents have access to decent work.***

The Skills and Employment Service (the Service), sitting within Economic Growth department of the Council, aims to help re-dress this balance. By supporting residents, with a focus on those furthest away from the labour market, to upskill/ re-skill, increase their confidence and improve their mental wellbeing will better enable them to progress not only work but also in life. Recognising that social inclusion, fairness and justice is hugely important in ensuring the long-term prosperity of the borough.

Cheshire West and Chester has sector strengths in Manufacturing (especially in chemicals and automotive) and Finance, however it also has a large and important service sector such as hospitality, retail, leisure, public sector and the gig economy. As a result, those residents in employment are more likely to be in part-time roles than residents in the rest of the sub-region, the North West or England. There is also a gender pay gap with full-time male workers earning more than their female equivalents[[4]](#footnote-4).

Economic resilience has also been a concern for the borough for a number of years as some of our most productive businesses are in sectors such as automotive and chemical manufacturing and indications are that they are more vulnerable to economic shocks, changing consumer preferences, automation and international trade changes. The initial concern for the Council was how these sectors would respond to the potential impact of Brexit and the evolving climate emergency, however this has recently been overshadowed by the COVID 19 pandemic.

**COVID 19**

COVID 19 is having a huge impact on the local economy and its people, as many sectors were forced to cease trading overnight – many of these employing large numbers of local residents such as hospitality and catering, tourism and retail – and currently there is no clear national strategy as to how normal life will be restored.

CW&C Council will need to play a central role in managing the impact of this virus on its people and its business community, supporting as many as possible in the short-term to continue to exist and maintain employment levels. It will also need to support individuals to look for other employment opportunities as a result of redundancy and match where possible these residents to those businesses looking to recruit as a result of increasing demands. This is where the Service’s expertise can play a vital role, acting as a brokerage service between the two parties.

The service will need to develop new operating models to comply with social distancing requirements which will require a huge channel shift to move Adult Education online and develop blended delivery models of learning not only for our traditional customers but also now to support the huge numbers of workers likely to lose their jobs as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic as sectors contract.

There will be a huge emphasis on retraining for other sectors and the growth in demand for up to date digital skills as everything moves online. We will have to take steps to minimise the risks of the growing digital divide between residents who have these digital skills and the necessary equipment, including access to broadband, and those who do not.

In the medium-longer term the Council will also need to support both individuals and businesses to recover from this economic downturn, evolving and responding in a proactive and co-ordinated manner.

Across CW&C there is a lot of excellent work being delivered and this of course will need to continue, however as a result of COVID 19, even more needs to be done to ensure our residents remain resilient and supported to benefit from the opportunities as they arise when the economy begins to recover.

**Sustainable Development Goals**

As a Service we believe we directly support 4 of the sustainable goals set out by the UN in 2015[[5]](#footnote-5). They are;

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  |  |
| We help to integrate health and well-being into our service delivery as core, commissioning curriculum and services that impact positively on the health and well-being of our service users.We provide a safe environment and work with key stakeholders who can offer support to our customers on debt, housing and health | We provide an accessible, high quality adult learning programme within a framework of quality assurance and continuous improvement. The offer is based on local need and aims to raise aspiration of out learners and their children (through our Family Learning offer). We carry out Equality and Diversity Impact assessments to ensure our offer meets the needs of our learners | Our Work Zones are set within local area and deliver high levels of job outcomes for target customersSecuring external funding for bespoke employment support, promoting the Local Living Wage and proactively working with employers to provide “good” jobs.Working with DWP to minimise barriers to employment and providing support to those in work on low pay.Encouraging maximum social value from Council procurement, supporting local spend and positive impact on local economy. | Minimise travel by using communication technology, adopting flexible and mobile workingRecycling and re-using materials in our delivery and promoting sustainable practice across the team – supporting the Council’s declared climate emergency.  |

Throughout this document we will highlight which goal this activity supports.

**Links to CW&C Council Plan and Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)**

Pre- COVID 19, the Council published its Council Plan which set out how, by 2024, it hoped to support;

* more people benefiting from improved skills and higher earnings
* local business growth and investment
* increased productivity

This activity would be achieved through collaborative working with the Cheshire and Warrington LEP, building on the development of the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and the Local Area Industrial Strategy for CW&C. (Both of these documents will need to be amended to reflect the impact of COVID 19 as priorities for action will have changed.) The CW&C Employment and Skills Service, through its core service will help to deliver those actions focused on supporting local people into work by providing:

* An Adult Education programme targeted at enabling local people to gain employment, through learning, skills and mentoring
* A holistic range of Employment Support programmes, targeted at those furthest away from the labour market, providing appropriate interventions to help them to progress towards employment.

The Service will also:

* Continue to support the LEP in its development of real-time local labour market information (working with EMSI) which will help us to monitor demand for jobs and skills in Cheshire West and across the wider sub-region, track recruitment trends and levels of recovery. This will be supported further through the ongoing work of the Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub. This intelligence will also be used to inform our Adult Education Budget (AEB) curriculum planning and commissioning.
* Continue to work with Cheshire East and Warrington Borough Councils to develop and deliver the “Journey First” European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) project, providing employability support and training to our more vulnerable young people and adults. (However, this target group may need to be amended to reflect the change in the cohort of those seeking work as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic in the short-medium term).
* Continue to develop a Supported Internship Programme, enabling individuals with special education needs to access training and work experience which will enhance their ability to access sustainable employment in the future. (This may be even more crucial given the potential increased levels of competition in the job seeking market as a result of COVID 19.)

As a Council, we need to support our residents and businesses to ensure that despite all the challenges, the borough remains a strong, excellent and ambitious area of the UK to live, work, invest, thrive and belong. The Service will play a crucial and invaluable role in achieving this now and in the future.

**2 Context Setting**

**Who we are**

Cheshire West and Chester Council’s Skills and Employment Service (the Service), aims to support adults that face a range of barriers to enable them to achieve their life goals.

The Service offers pathways of support and skills development which allows these adults to enter employment and/or progress in work. Barriers include low skill levels, physical and mental health conditions, learning disabilities/ difficulties and personal/family circumstance.

The Skills and Employment team is part of the Council’s Economic Growth Service and delivers employment support, learning and skills provision across the borough.

**Our Intent** is to support targeted residents and their families to:

***‘Progress in Life and Work’***

To deliver our intent, we provide high quality, planned curriculum pathways to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours that lead to sustained employment outcomes. The Service is keen to pilot new approaches in employment support, creating partnerships that produce tangible, long term economic and social benefits for our residents and the borough. We aim to be recognised within the Council, its wider partners and stakeholders as leaders and influencers in the field of employment skills, learning and employment support, with specific focus on reducing long term unemployment.

We offer;

* A broad, ambitious and coherently planned curriculum of Adult Education (including Family learning) responding to local need, focusing on inclusion, participation, wider skill development and progression for all learners from Entry level to Level 2.
	+ This will lead to further learning with local providers and/or employment outcomes
* A curriculum that develops the knowledge, behaviours and transferable skills adults need to succeed in life and work aligned to the following five outcomes:
1. Learners benefit from programmes that develop their personal resilience, health, wellbeing and confidence
2. Learners on Foundation programmes are supported and prepared to progress to further learning
3. Learners on functional skills programmes will be able to develop English, maths and digital skills that can be applied in life and work
4. Learners will acquire strong employability skills and develop the personal qualities, behaviours and attitudes valued by employers
5. Learners access vocational skills that are aligned to clear local labour market needs
* This will lead to further learning, independence and employment.
* The provision of specialist mentoring services through co-locating our staff at point of need to guide and advocate on behalf of customers navigating the journey towards sustainable and better employment.
* Leading to progression to further learning, employment, in work progression and wider life progressions as appropriate.

These outcomes will be achieved (implemented) by;

* Understanding our communities and geographical employment base; engaging targeted residents and providing them with an individualised programme of quality assured learning and support set within the context of our local labour market.
* Commissioning a range of specialist providers that offer a curriculum that responds to local need and ensure accountability for delivering on our intent.
* Providing centrally located one-stop centres (Work Zones) of adult education and support, as well as commissioning a range of selected adult education providers to deliver adult learning, support and skills development across the borough.
* Ensuring our teaching staff have the necessary qualifications, expertise and pedagogical knowledge to deliver a relevant curriculum designed to engage, challenge and progress learners.
* Deploying specialist Tutors across targeted schools and Children’s Centres to deliver an aspirational programme of Family Learning designed to have positive inter-generational impact.
* Providing a service to employers who recruit from our customer base to meet their demand for labour and promote inclusive economic growth in Cheshire West and Chester.
* Participating in sub-regional and national networks and partnerships to share best practice, maintain leadership in our field and attract funding to widen our impact.
* Promoting inclusion, participation and self-determination for our targeted residents in everything we do.

Finally, we monitor the impact of our actions to enable us to measure our performance and demonstrate the effectiveness of our approach to funders, leaders and other bodies. This includes analysing enrolments, achievements and progression (further learning, employment or softer progressions) and the effectiveness of our curriculum and approach to delivery.

**Key programmes of activity for the Service**

Between 2020 –2024, the Service will deliver on a range of programmes, including;

* **Adult Education Budget (AEB)** – supporting employability, vocational and Family Learning programmes. This programme is delivered through a mix of direct delivery

through our 4 Work Zones in Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford, our Family Learning programme delivering in children’s setting and our commissioned Adult Education provider partners to ensure the widest curriculum offer possible.

* **New Leaf** – An ESF/Big Lottery funded programme providing employment support to support adults in Ellesmere Port and Chester facing multiple barriers to progressing towards employment.
* **Individual Placement & Support (IPS)** – A NHS England funded programme, providing employment support in secondary mental health settings.
* **Employment Advisers in IAPT (EA in IAPT)** – a DWP funded programme in partnership with CCG to provide employment support to people in primary mental health.

**In planning:**

* ESIF – **Journey First** project – in development to provide employment support to vulnerable adults and young people due to start October 2020.
* **Supported Internships** – in development to support individuals with special education needs to access training and work experience (pending final ESFA approvals).
* ESIF – **Parents First** project – submitted and at appraisal stage. Aimed at supporting parents eligible for 2, 3 & 4 year old free childcare towards employment.

**COVID Recovery Plan:**

* **Adult Education –** develop a virtual learning environment, populating it with course content and launching a blended learning offer for new learners from August 2020. Carry out a risk-assessment on what socially distanced provision can be supported through our 4 work zones and what alterations to traditional delivered models will be required (may be needed until February 2021).
* **Employment Support** – redesigning a socially distanced model for employment mentoring and re-igniting starts on programmes.

**3 Executive Summary**

This document aims to pull together a number of skills and employment recommendations from a range of national, sub-regional and local strategies in one place. As a result of this analysis, we can distil four key aims for The Service which are;

* to enhance the skills and competencies of local people to help them to gain and progress in productive employment, progress onto further learning and become and stay independent
* to develop resident resilience to enable them to thrive and progress in life
* to support residents so that they can develop the skills and values that will enable local businesses to compete and grow
* to support a borough culture of inclusivity, responsibility and good employment, underpinned by healthy and resilient workplaces

These aims can be grouped into 4 priority areas;

1. Supporting the borough to recover from the COVID 19 pandemic
2. Supporting skills and employment opportunities for all through access to training and mentoring support
3. Supporting progress in employment, through the low paid trail, which in turn will raise productivity levels and quality jobs growth in sub-regional and local sector strengths
4. Maximising and delivering on the sub-regional skills and employment priorities

To deliver on the priorities above, we have identified 15 actions for The Service as follows:

**Key Actions for Skills & Employment Service**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 | Develop a flexible and agile commissioning model that is able to respond to the emerging skills and employment demands post COVID 19, focusing initially on provision which can be delivered online or in line with social distancing guidelines and aligned to the recovery of the local economy.This will be achieved through commissioning of 2020/21 AEB provision in at least two waves. |
| 2 | Develop online content to support delivery of the Work Zone and Family Learning curriculum plans, supported by the development of a virtual learning platform. This blended delivery model will include new content aimed at retraining skilled workers to gain employment in expanding sectors.  |
| 3 | Develop and refine a Vacancy Matching service for residents looking for employment as a result of the crisis and for employers looking to recruit, working in partnership with the Business Growth team |
| 4 | Support targeted individuals/geographies facing significant barriers to progressing into work through our employment support projects and participating in any further place-based approaches in the borough Post COVID 19.  |
| 5 | Develop new channels for publicising our offer including using social media, e.g. the promotion of the Low Pay Trial available for those on low incomes.  |
| 6 | Develop the Council’s offer to support residents with SEND, improving transition to adulthood including the delivery of Supported Internships (subject to ESFA approval) from September 2020. |
| 7 | Support DWP to promote the Living Fuller Working Lives Campaign and encouraging employers to support employees staying in their roles for longer, including the potential of a Choose to Care pilot in partnership with Skills for Care. |
| 8 | Inform the Council approach to Social Value and provide brokerage support which will enable local residents to benefit from continuing regeneration projects. |
| 9 | Monitor the Anchor Institution initiative, offering support and advice to officers wishing to establish best practice. |
| 10 | Monitor the development of sector led groups and their demand for skills, including digital skills to ensure our evidence base is informed and our curriculum reflects need.  |
| 11 | Support the Accelerate Cheshire and Warrington project to help continue the upskilling and development of residents post-employment. |
| 12 | Support the ongoing development of local West Cheshire pledge activity to ensure that wherever possible, consideration is given to adults who are looking to gain employment. |
| 13 | Support the labour market intelligence work of the LEP and use it to inform the AEB curriculum each year. |
| 14 | Support the delivery and performance of Journey First project. |
| 15 | Support the skills and employment priorities identified through the Mersey Dee Alliance and the Constellation Partnership. |

The following section provides more detail on these priorities and identified actions and is followed by a detailed action plan and supporting appendices.

**4 Strategic Priorities**

**Priority 1: Supporting the borough to recover from the COVID 19 pandemic**

This will be our over-riding priority through the remainder of 2020-21 as the economic impact of COVID 19 is going to affect every aspect of the lives of our residents and businesses.

Despite government initiatives, it is likely there will be many residents who will be made redundant over the coming months, increasing the competition for smaller numbers of vacancies at least in the short-medium term. It is expected that the virus will have a negative impact on sectors which support the visitor economy such as; hospitality, catering, travel and tourism, leisure and hair and beauty. Many of these sectors have historically provided entry level positions for our Work Zone customers to progress into and have been crucial to the popularity of Chester as a tourist destination. The Skills and Employment Service will need to consider how it may wish to review its offer in light of these new demands.

One way would be to commission its Adult Education Budget (AEB) provision in at least two waves, securing generic training in the first instance that will enhance residents’ employability skills including digital skills, as well as key vocational skills that can be delivered within a socially distanced environment. Followed by other vocationally focused provision as the local economy recovers and emerging skills needs become evident. This will also mean considering new providers who have the capacity to delivery more online provision (complementing the national Skills Toolkit campaign).

The Service will also need to take steps to ensure its direct delivery programmes can be delivered in a way that supports the social distancing guidelines. This will mean converting existing, tested programmes into a digital format or potentially reconfiguring teaching venues. Without steps being taken now, enrolments and achievements will fall, impacting on the successful delivery of our ESFA contract. We will likely need to consider new ways to communicate our offer to customers.

We will maintain and develop a Vacancy Matching process, offering redundancy and job seeking support to residents looking for work and helping those employers who are looking to recruit source potential candidates. Our employment support and mentoring offer means that we are ideally placed to achieve this. This will be achieved through working in partnership with the Council’s Business Growth Team and will help to support local resilience in an unprecedented situation.

**ACTION 1:** Develop a flexible and agile commissioning model that is able to respond to the emerging skills and employment demands post COVID 19, focusing initially on provision which can be delivered online or in line with social distancing guidelines and aligned to the recovery of the local economy.

This will be achieved through commissioning of 2020/21 AEB provision in at least two waves.

**ACTION 2:** Develop online content to support delivery of the Work Zone and Family Learning curriculum plans, supported by the development of a virtual learning platform. This blended delivery model will include new content aimed at retraining skilled workers to gain employment in expanding sectors.

**ACTION 3:** Develop and refine a vacancy matching service for residents looking for employment as a result of the crisis and for employers looking to recruit, working in partnership with the Business Growth team

**Priority 2: Supporting skills and employment opportunities for all through access to training and mentoring support**

Post-COVID 19, the Service needs to support the Council in fostering a culture of inclusivity and ensure that more residents are able to access the employment opportunities that are available locally and developing transferrable skills that will benefit their life and work prospects.

We will keep our focus on health, linking with our Public Health colleagues and align our service to their priorities where appropriate. Our Family Learning team will continue to support parents and their children at the start of their journey to work, supporting aspiration and achievement through a bespoke inter-generational curriculum.

Meeting this priority will involve our targeted employment support projects that are designed to tackle complex worklessness. We want to build on the work done under Building Futures in Ellesmere Port and Winsford Whole Place and developing further place-based approaches aimed at tackling deprivation and lack of aspiration in target wards. It is likely that COVID 19 will impact different geographies and sectors in different ways and therefore the time taken to recover would also vary. There is a very real risk that large sectors of the population will be ‘left behind’ as the rest of the borough recovers. Analysis on the level of variation will be carried out and there is a chance that targeted interventions will be required. The Skills and Employment Service have played a critical role in previous place-based projects and would need to continue to offer support and advice moving forwards.

This activity will also be able to inform our local evidence base on skills needs – a mixture of social and economic data collected in partnership with our Insight and Intelligence team and the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). This intelligence will be used to shape and inform our curriculum plan now and in the future.

At a sub-regional level, the Service will also be working with other stakeholders via the In to Work Board, supporting those sectors who provide entry level opportunities to our more vulnerable and disadvantaged residents.

Pre COVID 19, the Service had begun to review how it supported those residents with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). Over the last 12 months the Service has developed an offer for those with SEND needs for those young people who would benefit from work experience as part of their training programme. This Supported Internship offer is still an ambition for the Service and we are still awaiting final approvals from the ESFA.



We will also be looking to see how we can support our ageing population to work for longer, working in partnership with the DWP to promote the value of maintaining valuable staff through their Living Fuller Working Lives Campaign.

The Service has established links with Skills for Care and is exploring whether we could encourage older residents to return to work on a flexible basis to support the care sector meet its increasing demands. This “Choose to Care” pilot has so far been positively received and we would hope to re-kindle discussions post COVID.

The Service is part of an officer group who have been supporting employers looking to deliver on their social value obligations as part of their contracts with the Council. For example, VINCI construction who will be responsible for the Ellesmere Port Hub and Northgate phase 1 regeneration projects and Protos who will be developing sites in Ellesmere Port as part of the Cheshire Science Corridor.

This Social Value activity will include working with adults looking to upskill and retrain to access new employment opportunities, which could include securing work through the construction phase of these projects or via the end user activity, eg the Cinema developed as part of Northgate Phase 1. The Service can offer the use of Work Zones as venues to deliver training or careers events on behalf of these infrastructure projects.

One consideration identified through the Local Area Industrial Strategy (LAIS) was for the Council to work with other “anchor institutions” such as the university, the police and the NHS to develop a framework of what “good and inclusive” employment should look like and agree to sign up to it and promote to other businesses. This “leading by example” approach hopefully will encourage other employers to do the same and the Council is exploring how we can reward those employers who decide to follow suit.

The Skills and Employment Service will be able to advise how this could be achieved locally and help to broker links between employers looking to recruit and those looking for work. The Service also works with a number of stakeholders who could advise whether any working practices could be changed to encourage more diversity within these public sector workforces.

**ACTION 4:** Support targeted individuals/geographies facing significant barriers to progressing into work through our employment support projects and participating in any further place-based approaches in the borough Post COVID 19.

**ACTION 5:** Develop new channels for publicising our offer including using social media, e.g. the promotion of the Low Pay Trial available for those on low incomes

**ACTION 6:** Develop the Council’s offer to support residents with SEND, improving transition to adulthood including the delivery of Supported Internships (subject to ESFA approval) from September 2020.

**ACTION 7:** Support DWP to promote the Living Fuller Working Lives Campaign and encouraging employers to support employees staying in their roles for longer, including the potential of a Choose to Care pilot in partnership with Skills for Care.

**ACTION 8:** Inform the Council approach to Social Value and provide brokerage support to enable local residents to benefit from continuing regeneration projects.

**ACTION 9:** Monitor the Anchor Institution initiative, offering support and advice to officers wishing to establish best practice.

**Priority 3: Supporting progress in employment, through the low paid trail, which in turn will raise productivity levels and quality jobs growth in sub-regional and local sector strengths**

The Cheshire and Warrington Local Industrial Strategy (LIS)[[6]](#footnote-6) and the Local Area Industrial Strategy (LAIS) identified a number of sectors as strengths for the sub-region and Cheshire West and Chester.



Not all of these sectors provide entry points for our service users due to the skill levels required at entry, those that do include; food production and the visitor economy. The Service will need to monitor the developments at Thornton Site, Ince which aims to develop “Green” jobs as some of these may be accessible to Work Zone customers.

The recommendation within the LIS was that sector-led groups would be established to identify ways in which these industries could be supported to grow and improve productivity levels, which would include upskilling the workforce. This will be supported by the Accelerate Cheshire and Warrington Project[[7]](#footnote-7) led by the University of Chester. This project will offer training programmes to employees at a reduced rate, initially focusing on programmes at Level 2 and 3 (GCSE grade A – C/ 9-4 and A Level). This project will also support the recruitment of 3 skills brokers who will promote the skills offer available to employers through the Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub.

The Service would need to monitor this activity and ensure sub-regional economic strategies keep focus on the sectors that recruit from our customer base. This project also has the potential to continue the skills development of residents finding work through Work Zone or DWP interventions and this could help with the successful transition into sustainable employment.

The Cheshire and Warrington LEP are also developing a Local Digital Skills Partnership, monitoring the growing demand for digital skills in a wide range of sectors. This has been made even more crucial in the change in working practices as a result of COVID 19.

The Service needs to ensure that digital skills are a key part of the curriculum offer available to our customers as this will help to ensure they are employable in the emerging workplaces.

**Action 10**: Monitor the development of sector led groups and their demand for skills, including digital skills to ensure our evidence base is informed and our curriculum reflects need.

**Action 11:** Support the Accelerate Cheshire and Warrington project to help continue the upskilling and development of residents post-employment.

**Priority 4: Maximising and delivering on the sub-regional skills and employment priorities**

The Cheshire and Warrington LEP have commissioned a number of key projects that will support skills and employment (some of which are mentioned above). This includes the Cheshire and Warrington Skills Pledge – aimed at fostering better collaboration between employers and schools/ colleges to raise awareness of the local employment opportunities and inspire young people to make informed careers choices, with a particular focus on Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) careers. This project also has the potential to broker links between employers and adults.

In addition to the sub-regional projects, the LEP is looking to refocus the Education and Skills Board so that it responds to the skills requirements of the LIS. Part of this work will include development of a more robust evidence base on skills provision and job growth (current and projected) via its Labour Market Intelligence working group. This will inform the strategic priorities of the Pledge Project and help support other key skills activities.

The Service will be looking to use this evidence to inform its AEB provision as mentioned in Priority 1.

The Cheshire and Warrington “Journey First” Project will be launched in 2020, supporting individuals aged 14 + to access training and employment opportunities, providing targeted support to those in most need.

The Service is a strategic and delivery partner in the adult part of this project and will use the additional funding to develop a personalised employment mentoring programme with access to a wide range of interventions including skills development for those residents who face the greatest barriers to work.

In addition to the above, Cheshire West and Chester Council also work closely with other local authorities outside our LEP area. Working through the Mersey Dee Alliance (Flintshire, Wrexham and Wirral area), the Service has the potential to work cross border on skills and employment projects. For example, to develop a support offer to Airbus employees who currently face an uncertain future.

The Council also have links to The Constellation Partnership (Cheshire and Warrington LEP, Staffordshire LEP, Cheshire East, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LAs) working in partnership with HS2. This will hopefully generate jobs for our residents in the future.

**ACTION 12:** Support the ongoing development of local West Cheshire pledge activity to ensure that wherever possible, consideration is given to adults who are looking to gain employment.

**ACTION 13:** Support the labour market intelligence work of the LEP and use it to inform the AEB curriculum each year.

**ACTION 14:** Support the delivery and performance of Journey First project.

**ACTION 15:** Support the skills and employment priorities identified through the MDA and Constellation Partnership.

**4 Governance, Oversight & Peer Support – Policy Statement**

Good governance, oversight and peer support is a vital function of Skills and Employment team’s approach to performance management, quality assurance and improvement with a particular focus on what is happening in our classrooms. These functions can be both external and internal and utilised to provide a forum for both challenge and support, providing strategic direction to the Skills and Employment team; accountability for performance and making a real difference to the learning experience through the sharing of knowledge, experience and best practice.

The following table sets out how the Adult Education at Cheshire West and Cheshire Council is governed:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Body** | **Type** | **Int/Ext**  | **Areas covered** | **Reporting Frequency** |
| Adult Education Board  | Governance | Ext | **UNDER DEVELOPMENT** Strategic direction of the serviceOverarching performance oversightSafeguarding and Prevent Quality assurance and improvement of Teaching, Learning and AssessmentModeration and sign off for service Self-assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan | Quarterly |
| Skills & Employment Management team  | Governance | Int | Strategic direction of the serviceLabour market analysis informing curriculum planning and commissioningLearner data analysisContracted partner data analysisOverarching contract analysis- retention, achievement, progressionFinancial performanceQuality assurance and improvement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Self-assessment and Quality Improvement planningStaff performance management and wellbeingSafeguarding  | Bi-weekly |
| Meetings with Exec Portfolio Holder | Oversight | Int  | Strategic direction of the serviceKey service developments/headlines | Monthly |
| ILR returns to ESFA  | Scrutiny  | Ext  | Performance management through the return of the ILR and funding claims by specified dates to ensure the service is performing to contract and providing value for money. | Monthly |
| Sub-contracting Audit  | Scrutiny | Ext | A full external audit of all our sub-contracting arrangements to ensure compliance with our Funding Agreement | Annual  |
| CW&C Performance Management Framework | Scrutiny  | Int | Service Qualification Achievement RatesJob outcomes | Quarterly |
| Place Strategy Scrutiny Panel | Scrutiny | Int | Changes to service delivery, changes in data performance, Ofsted performance  | Called in as required |
| Preparation for Adulthood Strategy Group  | Governance  | Int/Ext | **In Planning**: To provide the governance function for Supported Internships  | Bi-monthly |
| People Scrutiny Panel | Scrutiny | Int | **In Planning:** Oversight of Supported Internship programme | Called in as required |
| Cheshire and Merseyside Adult Education Partnership | Peer Support | Ext | Sharing of experience, good practice and benchmarkingPeer moderation of Self-Assessment report  | Bi-monthly |
| LEAFEA Network  | Peer Support | Ext  | Sharing of experience and good practice  | Quarterly |
| Holex Network  | Peer support | Ext | Professional developmentSharing of experience and networking | 2 annual conferences & regular email communication |

**5 Action plan**

|  |
| --- |
| **Priority 1: Supporting the borough to recover from the COVID 19 pandemic** |
| **Action** | **Outcome** | **Lead** | **Resource** | **When** |
| ACTION 1: Develop a flexible and agile commissioning model, recognising the restrictions as a result of COVID 19.This model may be used more than once this commissioning year. | Provision commissioned and delivered is flexible and able to meet emerging skills and employment demands post COVIDGreater consideration given to new providers able to deliver online provision, or from within settings which can adhere to socially distancing guidelines at funding panel. | MS  | Existing staffing resourceAEB provision funded through ESFA | Model in place by July 2020Further commissioning date to be confirmed |
| ACTION 2: Develop online content to support delivery of the Work Zone and Family Learning curriculum plans, supported by the development of a virtual learning platform. | Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) developed, with clear structure and purposeVLE used by teaching staff to deliver course content and easily accessed by learners, including those who are looking to retrain/ upskill.Consideration given as to future blended model post COVID | AR/MMSupported by new On-line learning project co-ordinator | Monitored by existing staffDeveloped by new postCPD for tutors requiredCosts to support VLE development | VLE to be in place by end of June 2020VLE to be used regularly by tutors and customers by end of July 2020 |
| ACTION 3: Develop and refine a vacancy matching service for residents and employers  | Resident enquiry form developed and shared via websites and social media, to be used by Work Zone and Employment Support OfficersVacancy information monitored and circulated to staff and customersEmployer form developed and shared via website and social media to register local vacancies (to be shared with staff and customers). Linked to Evolutive CRM systemEmergency response data used to inform senior Council staff and feed into sub-regional data collection to monitor local impact of the virus.Development of positive case studies, to promote local activity and the work of the Service. | CL/JHPost-16 and Apprenticeships – Performance Monitoring Officer | Existing staff time(Monitoring closely to see whether a further 2 Employment Support Officers will be required and the impact of the Journey First Project) | Forms in place by end of March 2020Emergency response summaries available from April 2020 |
| **Priority 2: Supporting skills and employment opportunities for all through access to training and mentoring support** |
| **Action** | **Outcome** | **Lead** | **Resource** | **When** |
| ACTION 4: Support targeted individuals/geographies facing significant barriers to progressing into work through our employment support projects and participating in any further place-based approaches in the borough Post COVID 19.  | Targeted individuals and geographies receive the support they need to develop their skills and employment prospectsTeam is involved in any future place-based projects in West Cheshire | CL/AR | Existing staff resourcesPossible additional place-based funding available | On-going |
| ACTION 5:Develop new channels for publicising our offer including using social media, e.g. the promotion of the Low Pay Trial available for those on low incomes | Greater awareness of the skills and employment offer available through the Work Zones and the wider serviceImproved working relations with the CW&C communications team | AR | Existing resources | On-going |
| ACTION 6:Develop the Council’s offer to support residents with SEND, improving transition to adulthood including the delivery of Supported Internships (subject to ESFA approval) from September 2020. | Supported Internship Programme fully approved by ESFA. Staff recruited, employers and students identified (through EHCP)20 learners to have completed a Supported Internship programme with the Council by August 2021 | JH  | New delivery team recruited (using ESFA funding) | Approvals for delivery from ESFA by end of June 2020Team to be in place to deliver by September 2020.First students on programme by October 2020. |
| ACTION 7:Support DWP to promote the Living Fuller Working Lives Campaign and encouraging employers to support employees staying in their roles for longer, including the potential of a Choose to Care pilot in partnership with Skills for Care. | Better awareness of the DWP Living Fuller Working Lives CampaignMore residents aged 50+ in workChoose to Care pilot further developed | CL/LM | Existing staffPossible pilot funding to support Choose to Care | On-goingDecision to be made regarding pilot by December 2020 |
| ACTION 8:Inform the Council approach to Social Value and provide brokerage support to enable local residents to benefit from continuing regeneration projects. | Social Value agreements between CW&C and Contractors in placeMore local residents to benefit from regeneration projects | CL/LM | Existing staff | Social Value outcomes for VINCI projects achieved by March 2021 |
| ACTION 9: Monitor the Anchor Institution initiative, offering support and advice to officers wishing to establish best practice. | Anchor Institution Approach developed for West Cheshire | LM  | Existing staff | On-going |
| **Priority 3: Supporting progress in employment, through the low paid trail, which in turn will raise productivity levels and quality jobs growth in sub-regional and local sector strengths** |
| **Action** | **Outcome**  | **Lead**  | **Resource** | **When** |
| ACTION 10: Monitor the development of sector led groups and their demand for skills, including digital skills to ensure our evidence base is informed and our curriculum reflects need.  | Curriculum plan remains informed by actual skills needs of employers, improving our customers chances of progressing into work | LM/MS | Existing staff | On-going |
| ACTION 11: Support the Accelerate Cheshire and Warrington project to help continue the upskilling and development of residents post-employment. | Accelerate used by employers to continue the skills development of residents once in work, reducing the “churn” of employees in some sectors | LM | Existing staff supported by Accelerate Team | Skills Brokers in place by April 2020First training programme available May 2020 |
| **Priority 4: Maximising and delivering on the sub-regional skills and employment priorities** |
| **Action**  | **Outcome** | **Lead** | **Resource** | **When** |
| ACTION 12:Support the ongoing development of local West Cheshire pledge activity to ensure that wherever possible, consideration is given to adults who are looking to gain employment. | The Pledge project to work effectively across West Cheshire and identified opportunities where the project can also support adult engagement with employersCareers materials used with Work Zone customers | LM/AR | Existing staffThe Pledge is an ESIF funded project | On-going  |
| ACTION 13:Support the labour market intelligence work of the LEP and use it to inform the AEB curriculum each year.  | The Service is able to produce an informed evidence base each year which is used to develop the AEB curriculum plan.The Service shares intelligence from its delivery with the LEP | CL, LM and MS | Existing staffLEP Data and LMI meeting funded by DFE | On-going |
| ACTION 14: Support the delivery and performance of Journey First project.  | Journey First successfully targets and delivers provision across West Cheshire, supporting residents with multiple barriers into work | CL and JH | Extra staff with be recruited and funded by ESIF | Staff to be recruited by September 2020 with delivery to start in October 2020. |
| ACTION 15: Support the skills and employment priorities identified through the MDA and Constellation Partnership. | Curriculum plan informed by wider skills and employment needs, and the Service able to work with others regarding training and development required to support business growth or redundancies | LM | Existing staffPossibly extra funding for Constellation Work | On-going |

**Appendix A: Policy context**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Policy Objective**  | **Context and Rationale** |
| **National**  |  |
| DWP Fuller Working Lives (2017)<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fuller-working-lives-a-partnership-approach> | A framework which supports older worker employment rates, including recommendations for; flexible working, retraining for a new career, self-employment, volunteering and phased retirement. This is in response to the fact that is predicted that one in three of the working age population will be aged 50+ by 2022 and the number of people leaving the labour market “early” has increased.  |
| Industrial Strategy (November 2017)<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy-building-a-britain-fit-for-the-future> | Government vision to create an economy that boosts productivity and earning power throughout the UK. It outlined 5 foundations of productivity; ideas, people, infrastructure, business environment and places along with 4 grand challenges; AI and data economy, future of mobility, clean growth and ageing society. Skills and employment actions are contained throughout the document, especially within the people section. |
| **Sub-regional** |  |
| Cheshire and Warrington LEP Strategic Economic Plan (July 2018)<http://www.871candwep.co.uk/content/uploads/2018/07/SEP.pdf> | Outlines the LEPs ambition to drive the economy forward, capitalising on the sub-regions unique strengths and opportunities. It highlights key sector strengths and their potential challenges, what growth aspirations the area has and what interventions are needed to achieve the ambition of a £50 billion economy by 2040. Areas covered in the document include; transport, skills, science and innovation, energy, digital, housing and place marketing. |
| Cheshire and Warrington LEP Skills and Education Plan<http://www.871candwep.co.uk/content/uploads/2017/12/SkillsBrochure_Layout.pdf> | Outlines how the LEP aims to put employers at the heart of inspiring and informing residents about career and progression opportunities and making the curriculum fit for purpose. The three priorities are;* Ensure everyone is full informed of career and progression opportunities, building on the pledge model
* Improve the quality of the curriculum offer by supporting employers to work together with training, skills and education providers – with a special focus on STEM and digital skills
* To establish a communications hub to provide coherent messages on skills and employment

The delivery of the plan is supported via the Employer Skills and Education Committee:<http://www.871candwep.co.uk/boards/employer-skills-and-education-committee-meetings/> |
| Cheshire and Warrington Local Industrial Strategy<http://www.871candwep.co.uk/local-industrial-strategies/> | This document outlines how the LEP aims to build on existing strengths and create the conditions to make Cheshire and Warrington the UK’s foremost centre for the commercialisation of the knowledge economy, restoring the areas “productivity premium” and boosting the resilience of the economy, make progress towards the £50 billion economy vision and reduce economic disparities across the sub-region. The identified three outcomes include;* Providing the environment and support that will encourage a more productive economy
* Building on strengths and supporting diversity so that the economy is more resilient
* Supporting residents and workers to reach their full potential through skills and training so that the economy is more inclusive

The third outcome has a number of skills and employment actions/ recommendations |
|  |  |
| **Cheshire West and Chester** |  |
| Cheshire West and Chester Play Your Part – Council Plan (Draft) <https://participatenow.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/local-economy> | Outlines how the Council believes it can support the local economy to grow and deliver good jobs with fair wages for its residents. This includes how more people can benefit from improved skills through the local skills and employment services and encourage businesses to engage with colleges and schools, along with realising the potential of apprenticeships. It has a string focus on “inclusive growth” and is looking to explore how community wealth models could be developed. |
| Cheshire West and Chester Local Area Industrial Strategy<https://www.letstalkbizcw.co.uk/documents/Cheshire%20West%20and%20Chester%20Local%20Area%20Industrial%20Strategy%20Evidence%20Base%20-%20July%2019.pdf> | Summarises how the local area is both similar and different to the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region. For example outlines how the Council could support higher level skills within the Cheshire Science Corridor, better understand the higher than average levels of part time work in key sectors and higher than average proportion of workers earning below the Real Living Wage |
| Cheshire West and Chester Adult Education Budget Commissioning and curriculum plan  |  |

**Appendix B:**

**Borough Profile: September 2019, produced by CW&C Insight and Intelligence team**

The following facts are from the above document and provide “State of the Borough” information

**Its people;**

* Population in CW&C is forecast to increase by about 10% to 367,000 by 2035 with those aged 65 plus seeing the biggest increase (46%). Numbers of people aged 85 and over is forecast to more than double.
* Quality of life is generally good for many people across the Borough, with lower levels of deprivation, higher incomes and generally good health, however, there are pockets of significant disadvantage, where residents experience poorer health outcomes, living conditions, educational attainment and economic prospects.
* At the time of the last Census in 2011, 5% of the population (17,600) were Black and Minority Ethnic.

**Deprivation**;

* In 2016, 12.7% (7,300) of children aged under 16 were living in poverty, compared to 17.0% nationally. However, at a very local level some small neighbourhood areas record rates of child poverty of at least 35%.
* 16 neighbourhoods rank in the 10% most deprived in England. Around 24,000 residents live in these areas.
* Two neighbourhoods are ranked in the 2% most deprived in England. One in Lache ward and one in Winsford Over and Verdin ward. Around 2,900 residents live in these areas

**Skills and education;**

* In Cheshire West and Chester, nearly 1 in 13 of the working age population (aged 16-64) have no qualifications (7.3% in Cheshire West and Chester, 7.6% in England).
* 43.8% have a level four qualification or above (degree or equivalent), higher than the England rate of 38.3%.
* In 2019, the percentage of young people aged 16-17 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or not known is 2.7% (170 young people). This is lower than the national average of 5.5%17.

**Employment**

* The current employment rate is 75.6% (April 2018 – March 2019) this represents around 155,900 residents aged 16 to 64 and is the same as the England rate of 75.6%.
* More than a fifth (22.7%) of residents in employment work part time.
* The industries with the highest number of employees include retail (20,000 employees), health (19,000), professional, scientific and technical (18,000) and manufacturing (15,000).
* The manufacturing industry makes up 22.3% of gross value added (GVA) in Cheshire West and Chester.
* Unemployment has fallen to 3.7% (April 2018- March 2019), below the national rate of 4.1%, and down from a peak of 7.3% in April 2011-March 2012.
* The 2018 median gross weekly earnings for residents in full time employment are £562.20, lower than the England median of £574.90.

**Health and Wellbeing**;

* The 2011 Census found that 81.6% of people were in very good or good health.
* Those living in more deprived areas have significantly lower life expectancy. The inequality gap in life expectancy at birth is widest for men at 10.4 years. The gap for women is 9.1 years (2015-17).
* 63.5% of adults are estimated to be overweight or obese (62% in England)
* 29% of residents drive at levels that could harm their health , similar to the England average
* Around 1,300 people aged 18 or over have a moderate or severe learning disability
* At the time of the 2011 Census, 11.3 % (37,121) of people said they provided more than one hour unpaid care per week, with around 8,500 providing more than 50
* One in six adults aged 16 and over in England report experiencing symptoms of a common mental health disorder. This is over 46,000 adults in Cheshire West and Chester.
* Using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being scale, the mental well-being score for residents has improved slightly from 25.4 in 2011 to 26 in 2017.

.

**Business and the economy**

* There are around 14,060 businesses that employ around 177,700 people in Cheshire West and Chester.
* The level of gross value added (GVA) in Cheshire West is £10,092 million.
* In 2017, 25% of Cheshire West businesses said they had increased the size of their workforce in the past 12 months, compared to 17% 2011. 48% of businesses had vacancies in the past 1
* 2 months, 19% were ‘hard to fill’

For full details on Wards see; <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/your-council/key-statistics-and-data/ward-profiles.aspx>

**Appendix C: Stakeholder engagement**

The Skills and Employment Service work with a broad range of stakeholders both within and outside of the Council. A summary of these can be found in the table below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Group/ Network** | **Organisation/ Service** | **Aim of engagement** |
| Education Team | CW&C | To ensure effective transition from young person to adult and effective marketing of family learning provision.This has recently expanded to include discussions on the need for increased supported internship provision.  |
| Preparation for Adulthood Strategy Group | CW&C | Ensuring effective transition to employment outcomes for young people with SEND in receipt of an EHCP.Governance of our Supported Internship programme. |
| Business Growth Team | CW&C | To ensure we are informed of local business developments and utilise business communications especially in our response to COVID 19  |
| Public Health Team | CW&C | To ensure our priorities are aligned to those of Public Health |
| Localities Team | CW&C | To ensure we are engaged and informed on planned community activities |
| Capital Projects and Procurement Team | CW&C  | To ensure we are engaged in any Social Value activity as a result of capital investment |
| Sub-contracted Adult Education partners | Training providers commissioned to deliver Adult Education provision across the borough.  | To monitor delivery in line with contract and ensure quality of provision. |
|  | Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) | To ensure we are delivering effectively in order to achieve maximum contract value |
| Learning Disabilities Partnership Board and Employment sub-group | Cross borough partnership chaired by CW&C Deputy Chief Exec | Improving life chances and opportunities for people with learning difficulties with a focus on employment outcomes |
| Redundancy Action Support Team | DWP | To support a fast response to local redundancy – offering employment support and facilitating links with alternative employment.Also receive learner referrals from DWP to our Work Zone Provision.  |
| Labour Market Skills and Data Group | Cheshire and Warrington LEP (Chaired) | To ensure our delivery plan is informed by real time labour market information |
| Pledge Partnership Board (and local pledge group meetings) | Pledge Partnership (ESIF project) | To ensure informed of careers related activity planned across the sub-region and how it could support our customers. |
| Accelerate Cheshire and Warrington | University of Chester (LAB for ESF) | To promote the use of the training available via the project to businesses to support sustainable employment of our customers |
| New Leaf | Torus (LAB for ESF/Big Lottery) | To ensure we effectively deliver against project targets, providing employment support to residents |
| IPS Project | NHS England | Providing employment support in secondary mental heath settings |
| Employment advisors in IAPT | DWP and CCG | Providing employment support to people in primary mental health |
| Journey First  | Cheshire East Council (LAB for ESF) | A local Authority partnership between CW&C, CE and Warrington to provide employment support to vulnerable adults and young people |
| MDA Strategy Group | Mersey Dee Alliance | To support skills and employment activities for Flintshire, Wrexham and Wirral |
| Skills and Employment Workstream | The Constellation Partnership | To support skills and employment activities for Cheshire East, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire in response to the development of HS2 |
|  |  |  |

1. 2011 Census [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Local Living Wage for Cheshire West and Chester is £9.00 per hour for employees aged 18 and above (2020-21). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. BRES data 2017 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cheshire West and Chester Local Area Industrial Strategy Evidence Base, Metro-Dynamics, July 2019 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Cheshire and Warrington Local Industrial Strategy: http://www.871candwep.co.uk/local-industrial-strategies/ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://candwgrowthhub.co.uk/accelerate/> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)