

# CPCA Employment and Skills Board workshop

19<sup>th</sup> January 2021

10:00am – 12:00pm

## Key take-aways

- The Board has developed a clear understanding of purpose, which is to:
  - Own the Skills Strategy going forward.
  - Be a partner to the CA rather than a review panel.
  - Advise and make decisions.
  - Self-assess its own expertise in order to become more effective.
- The CA can sometimes induce paralysis by analysis. The Board should switch focus from consuming data to making decisions based on that data.
- Addressing the North-South divide within the CPCA is a key strategic priority.
- Understanding future skills needs is a current capability gap. Ideas to address this include:
  - Commissioning another piece of work to further develop the labour market information provided in the CPCA Skills Deep Dive Paper on the impacts of Covid-19 on priority sector employment.
  - To then anchor this, something less theoretical is required, grounded in community and business engagement on future skills needs, combined with an understanding of the changes driven by COVID-19 in working behaviour. These ‘softer’ skills people will be necessary in the workplace to be effective and to drive productivity.
- Medium-term, opportunities include:
  - Identifying and mapping the businesses which are likely to grow in the next 3-5 years and engaging with them on their skills needs, as these will be the companies creating new jobs.
  - A business-led advisory group to skills providers to better address gap between skills supply and demand.
- Nevertheless, upskilling and supporting the short-term unemployed immediately is equally, if not more important than long-term skills demand. To achieve this, a clear

localised targeted marketing campaign is a way of beginning to address the displaced adults and retraining them.

## Workshop Agenda

- Workshop – Assessing progress on the following:
  - Taking a local leadership role
  - Enhancing local knowledge
  - Impact on local skills provision
  - Covid-19 recovery and renewal plans
  - Progress against prior Skills Action Plan objectives
- Group discussion

## Discussion

### Workshop

#### Taking a local leadership role

- a) In what ways has your SAP become a local leader for skills work?**
- b) To what extent is your SAP working together with local partners including skills providers and employers?**

- Personnel changes have meant a lack of a coherent plan and therefore lack of action.
- The SAP has provided a lot of data and information, perhaps too much, we need to hone it down and decide what the key take-aways are and how to act.
- The role of the group is about the co-ordination and dissemination of information and skills between different people and organisations.
- To act, the CA needs to start asking the group to make decisions at these meetings going forward.
- The Board needs to be viewed as a partnership between the CA and business rather than a hierarchical relationship.

#### Enhancing local knowledge

- a) How far is your SAP in developing a clear understanding of current and future skills needs?**
  - **How developed is your knowledge base?**
  - **What still needs improving?**

- As a group, there is more confidence in knowledge of current skills needs as opposed to future skills needs, as expected.
- To address future skills gap, there is a need to commission another piece of work to build a picture of what our employers may look like in 3-5 years and then extrapolate from that the skills needs.
- To then anchor this, we need something less theoretical which is grounded in community and business engagement to assess what skills are viewed as important in future in the CPCA region, combined with an understanding of the changes driven by Covid-19 in working behaviour. These 'softer' skills people will need in the workplace to be effective and to drive productivity. For example, developing management and leadership skills in how to manage an organisation remotely is another key area. A national challenge that could be pioneered in our CA.
- North/South divide in the region on skills. This is recognised by the CA and the adult education budget now reflects the greater need for investment in the North.

### Impact on local skills provision

#### **a) To what extent is your SAP influencing skills providers so that their offer better meets the skills and labour market needs in the area?**

- **This could include any provision you directly commission and/or any devolved budgets, functions or responsibilities (e.g. devolved AEB in MCA areas).**
- We need to account for what national patterns do for skills demands here: how does it affect the local area, how does it influence what our provider network is able to do and deliver to ensure the supply and demand elements are meeting one another?
- Whilst future skills demands are no doubt important, current skills demands are of even greater importance. Across some parts of CPCA one in five people are now on Universal Credit. We need to identify skills they currently have and if we have transferable skills for industries as they recover from the current crisis. Rather than trying to predict the future, we need to respond to current demand because employers know what they need.
- Building on this, we need a clear localised targeted marketing campaign as a way of beginning to address the displaced adults and retraining them.
- There is a medium term solution to skills demands: map and find all businesses likely to grow in the next 3-5 years then ask what their current skills needs are because they will be the companies creating the jobs. Example: As life science sector continues to grow, the construction sector will grow too. Last time this happened, the industry failed to capitalise due to lack of construction skills, we need to address this, this time round.
- Skills providers need a better working relationship with business - a business-led advisory group could be a way to do this.

## COVID-19 recovery and renewal plans

### a) How has your SAP influenced priorities for Covid-19 recovery and renewal plans?

- The CA's COVID-19 economic recovery plan was developed prior to the SAP. The SAP has therefore not influenced the economic recovery strategy.
- However, we are producing a refreshed Local Economic Recovery Strategy (LERS) for March which will account for the SAP and its influence.

## Progress against prior Skills Action Plan objectives

### a) What are the most significant elements of your skills action plan that you have been able to fulfil?

### b) Equally, which of those unfulfilled actions need addressing most?

- Addressing and understanding the soft skills needed by employers, this can be done by a combination of theoretical and granular analysis in collaboration with employers.
- We need to come together as a partnership to begin acting rather than receiving research and comments. The CA need to begin giving options and decisions rather than information. These then become a strategy.

## Future Objectives for the Board

- The board becoming a partnership between stakeholders and the CA going forward
- The CA providing options and decisions to be made at future Board decisions, supplemented by existing focus on presenting information for Board members to be aware of
- Producing a targeted marketing campaign to address short-term unemployment as a result of the pandemic
- Instilling the refreshed LERS with SAP insights
- To undertake medium-term analysis assessing the top-performing companies whom are most likely to grow in the region, then asking them for their skills needs – this will then help determine future skills needs as these are the businesses which will be providing future jobs.
- To (via the Combined Authority) consider commissioning MD to produce second phase of work following on from initial Skills Deep Dive Paper
- To accompany this theoretical work with some more granular qualitative survey work of providers and employers