

Open

Title:	Skills Hub Progress Report
Purpose:	To update Board Members on the activities of the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub including the development of the Skills Advisory Panel evidence base and action plan, the establishment of a Redundancy Task Force for Buckinghamshire and the proposed Workforce Skills Programme.
Recommendation:	That Board members note the content of this report and endorse the actions proposed.
Impact on Risk Register:	The development of the Skills Action Plan is a contractual commitment between this LEP and the Department of Education and this programme of activity supports the delivery of those contractual agreements.

1. Skills Advisory Panel, Research and Planning

Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) are a 2017 manifesto commitment and a key initiative under the Government's Industrial Strategy to address more effectively mismatches between skills supply and employer demand. The aim of SAPs is to support new local partnerships comprised of local employers, skills providers, and local government to pool knowledge on skills and labour market needs, and to work together to understand and address key local challenges. This includes both immediate needs and challenges and looking at what is required to help local areas adapt to future labour market changes and to grasp future opportunities. This will help colleges, universities and other providers deliver the skills required by employers, now and in the future. The Panel analyses and reaches an evidence-based view on local skills requirements to deliver the new SAP role on skills needs. It also informs the 'People' element of the Local Industrial Strategy and local post-16 skills provision, so that skills provision better meets labour market needs, now and in the future.

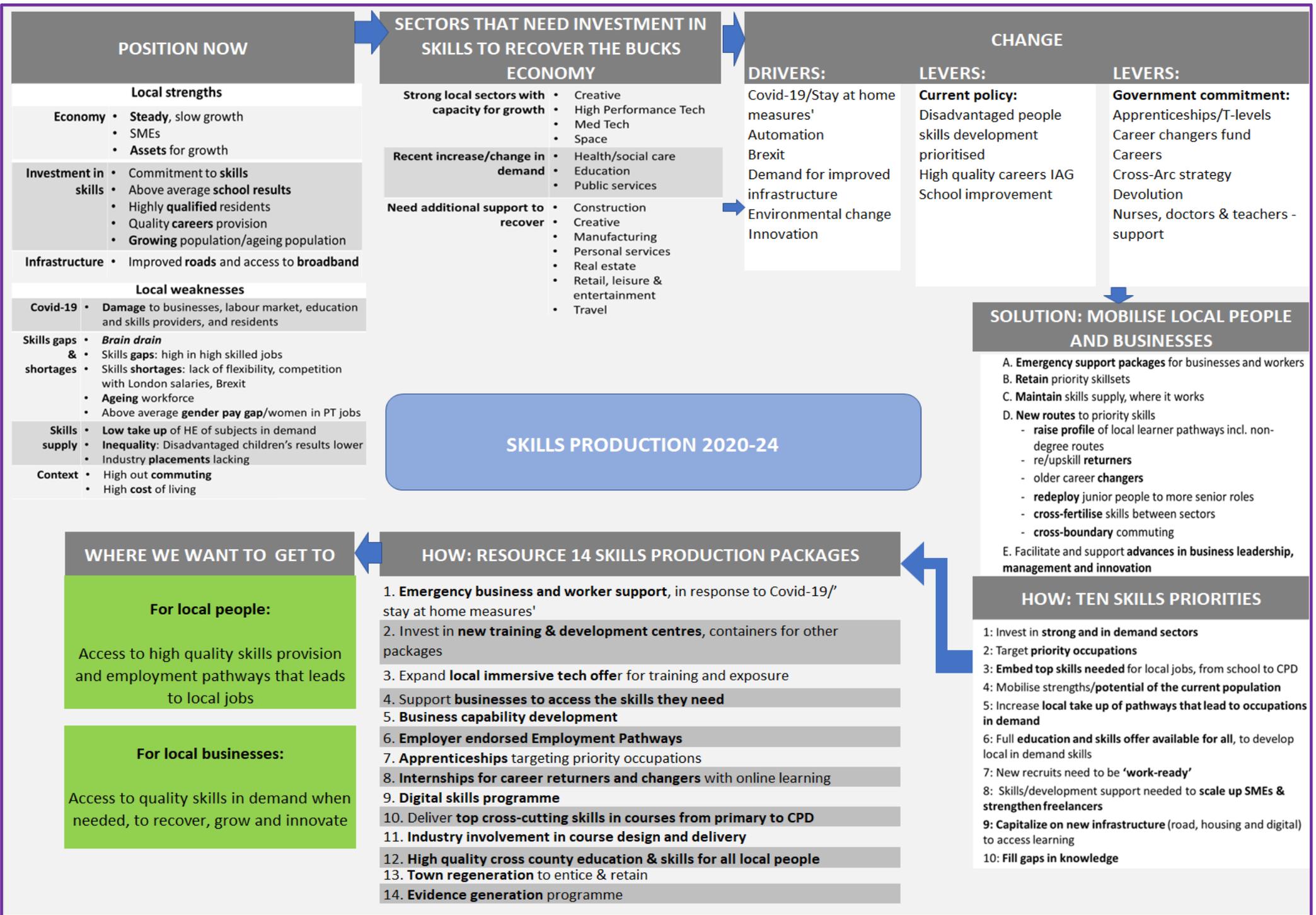
To achieve this aim, the SAP has undertaken a year of intensive research to generate high quality analysis, which Catherine Godward presented in a previous LEP Board meeting. DfE fund this activity for the purpose of building capacity, growing local capability sustainably and for producing high quality analysis to underpin the work of the SAP.

In order to digest what the evidence is telling us, an outline of what the "action plan" could look like has been developed and was shared with the 15 organisations making up the Skills Advisory Panel, plus DfE who sit as an observer to the Panel, at a meeting in June, when Professor Gavin Brooks was also introduced as the new SAP Chair. This action plan will need to be incorporated into the County's Recovery Action Plan and the refresh of the Skills Strategy for Buckinghamshire – *See later section.*

The Skills Advisory Panel was due at this stage to be considering the following:

- Are the identified actions the right ones?
- Who should deliver?
- What resource is needed?
- Are the actions sufficiently aspirational and “revolutionary” to deliver the ‘People’ element of the LIS?

Covid-19 has led temporarily to a focus on more immediate needs as a priority, particularly those of supporting people and employers through redundancy, and as a consequence the Panel has agreed to create a “Redundancy Taskforce” from amongst its members and to consider more long term activities at its September meeting.



Covid-19 - Related Activities

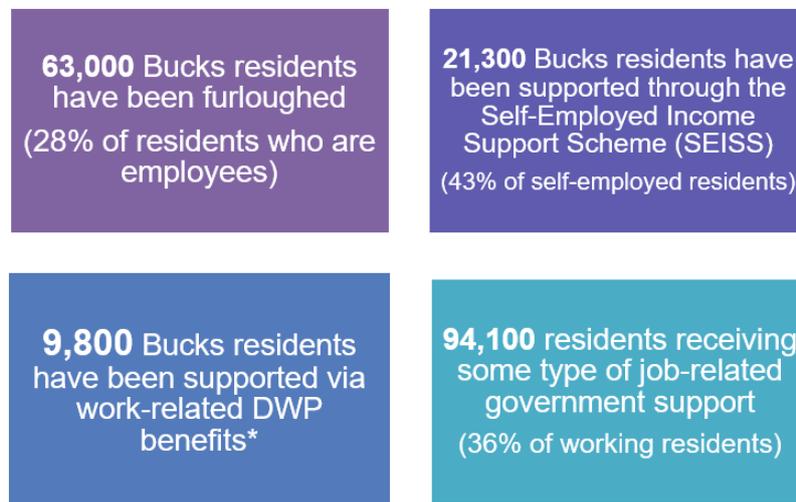
1. Redundancy Taskforce

i. What is it?

Members of the Skills Advisory Panel were asked if they would like to come together to establish a group called the “Redundancy Taskforce”, to consider what actions are needed to be taken as a priority, to support employers who are making staff redundant and/or for those individuals already redundant due to the current crisis.

ii. Why do we need it?

Early analysis was undertaken by the Research Team of the potential impact of COVID-19 regarding redundancies in Buckinghamshire.



**increase in claimants from March to May 2020*

Data correct as of 12 June 2020

We have further been informed that up to 82% of all apprentices in Buckinghamshire have been furloughed.

iii. Who has joined the taskforce?

The Taskforce is largely made up of the member organisations of the Skills Advisory Panel and includes: BBF, BLEP, Buckinghamshire Council, Bucks New University, University of Buckingham, Bucks College Group, DWP, Sylo Associates (HR and recruitment), Adviza (Adult Careers), NHS Health Education England, Community Impact Bucks, HS2 and partners, and Citizens Advice Bureau.

iv. What is it being asked to do?

- ✓ To identify all the resources and support currently on offer in the County for those who are newly redundant or are likely to be
- ✓ To create one online resource which all partners can have links to, to ensure there is “no wrong door” to the support available

- **The Support for Employers Group** will be looking at the resources and support available for business owners, including job brokerage schemes; incentive schemes for taking on young people (apprenticeships and traineeships); employment law; and HR
- **CV writing and general support for individuals** – will be looking at how we can support people to look at their career options more confidently and support them to make the right choices in these difficult times.

Each sub-group will be asked to answer the following questions:

- What is the current offer for this group?
- What could be offered, but isn't, which would really help?
- What else can partners deliver that is missing currently without further funding?
- With additional resource what else could be provided?
- Where could funding come from?
- Who should/could deliver the various offers?

One current issue that has been highlighted is the plethora of information sources available for employees and businesses during this challenging time from job opportunities, to career advice, to redundancy support for employers. This information is fragmented and difficult to navigate. BBF has developed an [interim solution](#) which is currently work in progress and needs to be refined and further developed potentially into a portal that could be hosted through the Skills Hub to become an effective “front door” for employees, employers, young people and other interested partners. There is a level of funding that has been secured; however, to fully develop this opportunity additional funding will be required, estimated as being approximately £30,000.

The sub-group leads, together with the Skills Advisory Panel, will re-group in early August to share information and discuss next steps.

2. Workforce Skills

It has been identified that there will be significant benefit in employing a full time Workforce Skills Manager and a part time Coordinator within The Skills Hub to include a wide range of activities and to work alongside the Business Advisers in the Growth Hub supporting employers with their business plans, particularly with post-Covid fallout, from a “people” perspective. To that end, funds have been made available from the Recovery Fund for these posts to be created for an initial period of 18 months, with an opportunity to extend subject to funding. Other areas of work will include:

- To facilitate the redundancy taskforce
- Creating new Apprenticeships opportunities and providing support for employers
- To work with employers to identify and seek out opportunities for T Level placements

- To broker those who are newly redundant due to Covid to those companies who are recruiting
- To provide information and advice concerning retraining issues for those needing to change career
- To manage contracts when requested including the Skills Advisory Programme contract with DfE
- To work closely with BLEP's research team, to identify actions for the skills agenda and seek to gain take up of identified actions with stakeholders particularly the members of the Skills Advisory Panel
- To work closely with the Under 19s Skills Manager and Team to ensure mutual support and beneficial working with employers
- To work closely with the Skills Teams at Buckinghamshire Council on related adult skills issues
- To support the employer sector skills groups
- To provide specialist advice and support to colleagues, learners, and stakeholders, responding to queries within the area of responsibility.

Another area of work which will be key for this post, is to work closely with both the LEP contract team and Buckinghamshire Council's Procurement Team to establish and collate the total social legacy derived from publicly funded contracts and, as appropriate, to support the contract holders. Once collated, this information to be made available perhaps with a 'live' calculator on the BLEP website like Southern Construction Framework's website – see below.



3. Under 19s

The work of the under 19s Team continues with pace and whilst Covid-19 has created many issues with roll out amongst schools, the Careers Hub has achieved the accolade of being the no 1 Careers Hub in the country for a 2nd year in a row.

The Buckinghamshire Skills Show has now been confirmed to run as a virtual Skills Show and will be held week commencing 9th November 2020.

A more detailed list of its Covid-19 related delivery plan can be seen in the next table:

Category /Objective	Action	Priority (low/med/ high)	Timescale	Progress	Progress Comment
Meet contractual targets	All schools will be matched with an Enterprise Adviser (EA) - 37 schools, 9 SEND/Pru, - 69 EAs in total	High	17 July		All schools mainstream currently have an EA - 2 SEND schools not matched
	Review impact of C-19 on completed Compass submissions	High	17 July		Schools have completed Compass ¹ C-19 survey
Continue to engage and support Careers Leads (CLs) and schools	Network group Zoom call with Careers Leads every 2 weeks	High	30 April & ongoing		Additional provision since C19
	Develop careers resource for young people – Isolation Inspiration 10-week programme with links to activities	Medium	4 th May		Completed - in reaction to C19. Now completed series of 3 Isolation Inspiration activities
	Virtual 1-2-1 meetings with CLs - Hub schools half termly, Non hub schools termly	Medium	Ongoing		Ongoing

¹ Note: Compass is a free tool provided by Careers and Enterprise Company for schools and colleges in England, that quickly and easily helps them to evaluate their careers activity against the eight the Gatsby Benchmarks. It allows you to see each school or college's progress over time and gives comparative data.

	Pool together resources to support transitions for students (Y11 and 13). Gather intelligence from CLs for reporting.	Medium	29 May		MY CHOICES project – ongoing
	Develop weekly communications plan for CLs.	Medium	Ongoing		Ongoing
	Head teacher ongoing engagement	High			Headteacher event held with 87 delegates
	Launch of new Hub – planning and engagement in light of changing priorities in schools – Headteacher /Governor etc Recruitment - plan	High	22 nd May –		New hub extension confirmed.
	Offer Benchmark (BM) 1 consultation for schools -align with workshops	Medium	1 June		BM1 completion has been a priority
	Plan to cover RD schools for next 3 months	High	20 April		Ongoing
Continue to engage EAs	Set up virtual Enterprise Advisor network meetings for academic year	Medium	25 March		Completed
	Review Enterprise Advisor levels of engagement and support accordingly	High			Completed
	Develop suitable Enterprise	Medium	7 May		Ongoing

	Advisor CIPD content				
	Conduct telephone-based or virtual Enterprise Advisor inductions and DBS checks	Medium	Ongoing		Ongoing
Develop virtual resources for key audiences	Develop 'Careers in the classroom' materials. Discuss with Cornerstone employers, Enterprise Advisors, other employers	Low	5 June		Ongoing
	Develop a virtual 'Bucks Skills Show' 2020	Medium	5 June		Date: w/c 9 th November. Series of employer led curriculum sessions.
	Utilise Cornerstone employers and Enterprise Advisors to develop digital resources (virtual mock interviews, CV critiquing, virtual WEX, virtual careers inspiration week)	Low	5 June		A series of Enterprise Advisor videos have been produced - all posted on Skills Hub YouTube channel
	Development of LMI video with WOW Show showcasing careers in Bucks	Medium	20 July		Ongoing
	Develop 'young person voice' – feedback and ideas for careers programmes in	High	5 June		Ongoing meeting with now established Student Careers

	Bucks led by Misbourne School				Leader forum
Develop case studies to help articulate impact	Develop Bucks ambassador portfolio e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers Leader • Head teacher • EA • Cornerstone employer • Compass+ user 	Low	15 May and ongoing		Ongoing
Other projects	SEND community of best practice - first meeting	Medium	20 May		Meeting complete and meetings set for next term
	Organise Bucks Skills Roadshow for next year – get agreement on new dates	Low	7 July		Need to plan (March 2021)

Long Term Activities

1. Refresh of Skills Strategy

The last Skills Strategy was created at the end of 2018, and consequently does not include the important activities needed to support the “People” theme in the Bucks Local Industrial Strategy or that of the recovery required for Covid-19. The recent intensive research will also need to be updated to include the impacts and actions required from Covid-19 fallout. However, despite this, much of the groundwork has already been completed and as such the Strategy can be pulled together relatively quickly. Work on it has already begun and Buckinghamshire Council has found resource to support this work. The Skills Hub and the Council will work closely to create the new Strategy and once completed, it will be open to consultation by all stakeholders, including the Skills Advisory Panel. The target completion date for this work is Autumn 2020.

The Strategy is unusually being worked on from a bottom up approach at this juncture, as the Action Plans identified on page 3 (but with significantly more detail) will be the key outcomes. It has yet to be agreed/discussed if the actions can be undertaken with a more aspirational “ask” – and this will be a topic for the September meeting of the Skills Advisory Panel.

2. Closer working with Buckinghamshire Council

One of the benefits of Covid-19 has been the closer working of The Skills Hub and Buckinghamshire Council. Already benefits can be seen such as: a reduction of duplicated activity; work on the Skills Strategy; working together on the Redundancy Taskforce; plans and alignment of delivery. This will continue post-Covid.

3. Creating social value from all public sector contracts

As has already been discussed, the Workforce Skills Team will work with BLEP and Buckinghamshire Council to create a '**social legacy**' from publicly funded contracts

4. Careers Hub

It has been confirmed by The Careers Enterprise Council that The Skills Hub will receive additional funding during the academic year 2020/21 to be able to include all schools in the Careers Hub scheme and will therefore expand from its current 21 schools to 37 from September. The original substantive part of this funding is cash matched by the Council and BLEP will match the additional funds.

5. Working with the Oxford to Cambridge Arc leads on Skills

This work has been delayed due to Covid-19; however, activity is now being ramped back up and meetings are being put in diaries once more. One of the key areas of work will be to amalgamate all of the skills research across the Arc to identify areas of overlap and where mutually beneficial work can take place to support the Arc's aspirations. Complimenting this, it is interesting to note that the Careers Enterprise Company is also looking at cross Arc activity and what it could look like. Information will be provided to the Board as and when anything becomes available.

6. Future Funding

The Skills Team continues to actively seek new opportunities for funding. Currently, a bid has been drafted for an additional £20,000 to support young people as they leave school this year and to prevent those identified as potential NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training) becoming so. The Skills Hub is likely to hear back re. this funding in August.

7. New Skills Hub website

Funds have been set aside for a new website to take over from that of OppsinBucks and Wannabe. Both websites are now significantly out-dated, and a completely new website is being created with a view to it linking with the BBF website and the CRM for activity analysis. The website has been fully scoped out and tenders for its update have been received. Given the impact of Covid-19, however, it has been further identified that significant additionality could be included to support all those faced with career changes at all stages of life, from first employment to retraining requirements in later life with career pathways and opportunities with a fully interactive experience could be included at additional cost which could be as much as £30,000 (see Redundancy Taskforce section). This sum would also enable the website to be 'future proofed' without the annual cost of licence fees

The new website, in either guise, will be completed by the end of the year.

Board members are asked to:

- **Note the content of this report and endorse the actions proposed.**