

GCP Skills Programme

Report to: Greater Cambridge Partnership Joint Assembly

Date: 20 February 2025

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1. Background

- 1.1 This paper sets out progress across the Greater Cambridge Partnership's (GCP's) Skills Programme. Substantial progress has been made across the programme and the Greater Cambridge ecosystem has benefited significantly from the work.
- 1.2 Recognising the importance the skills agenda plays in the growth of the Greater Cambridge economy, the GCP has been funding work on skills since its inception. Skills was a key pillar of the City Deal which states the Deal will develop "a locally responsive skills system that will support Greater Cambridge's growing sectors' and will specifically 'support employers to increase training, enhance information advice and guidance, and increase the uptake of apprenticeships".
- 1.3 Work has been targeted in these areas and has been very successful. The programme has far exceeded its target of 400 new apprenticeships, with over 1,000 apprentices supported. In addition, over 10,000 students have been connected with employers who provide apprenticeships. Growth in apprenticeship achievement rates in growth sectors in Greater Cambridge remains strong despite national declines. Where demand for certain elements of the service has been less than anticipated the service has been adapted to ensure targeted delivery.
- 1.4 Looking at more qualitative evidence, evaluation findings, as part of the Gateway Review work, show that the phase one skills programme was successful. Evidence shows that:
 - (a) Students were more aware of apprenticeships, the benefits of work experience, and how to find and apply for an apprenticeship.
 - (b) A growing proportion of parents had better knowledge about apprenticeships.
 - (c) Careers leaders in some schools changed the way they delivered advice around training and apprenticeships.
- 1.5 The Executive Board will be invited to consider progress to date and suggested next steps, including the appointment of a contractor to deliver the next phase of skills work.

1.6 The Joint Assembly is invited to consider and comment on the proposals to be presented to the Executive Board and in particular:

- (a) Progress to date.
- (b) The proposed appointment of Form the Future to deliver the next phase of skills work.

2. Current Progress and Next Steps

2.1 A summary of current activity is set out below and is delivering well against milestones:

Indicator	Quarterly Status			Target (2023-2024 Year 4)	Status against overall target	Target (2021-2025)
	Previous	Change	RAG*		RAG* (for end of year stage boundary)	
600 apprenticeship and training starts in the region as a result of intervention by the service, broken down by sector and level of apprenticeship (<i>Seasonal peaks and troughs in academic year</i>)	10	185	G	175	620	600
1520 adults supported with careers information, advice and guidance, broken down by sector where applicable (<i>Post-COVID need in community far lower than originally projected, with reprofiling and resource reallocation under discussion</i>)	167	185	A	448	1104	1520
600 Early Careers Ambassadors/YP Champions recruited, trained and active, broken down by sector (<i>Affected by year one delays to YP Champion programme, which has now launched and is beginning recruitment</i>)	6	0	A	230	104	600
450 employers supported to access funds and training initiatives, broken down by sector (<i>Some seasonality, as employers are more motivated to engage when considering training starts</i>)	29	23	G	150	421	450
400 students accessing work experience and industry placements, as a result of intervention by the service, broken down by sector (<i>Seasonal, with vast majority taking place in July each year</i>)	0	54	G	100	389	400
2486 careers guidance activities aimed at students aged 11-19 (and parents where appropriate) organised by the service and their impact (<i>Year-round, but with peak in middle of academic year</i>)	63	102	G	622	1785	2486
CRC – Develop a suite of 30 careers videos for post-16 education with employers to highlight careers specialisms and further development of careers and make available to Form the Future for use in their school-facing events	23	7	G	8	30	30
All Primary Schools (73) accessing careers advice activities aimed at children aged 7-11 (and parents where appropriate) organised by the service and their impact (<i>Non-cumulative, the focus is on developing and sustaining engagement over time, rather than a cumulative output, year-on-year</i>)	84	84	G	73	84	73
200 students accessing mentoring programme as part of this service (<i>Highly seasonal, with delivery between November-April each academic year</i>)	22	5	G	5	220	200
Form the Future partnership with Unifrog enabling Form the Future to better monitor, measure and assess the impact of the GCP Skills and Apprenticeships programme in 21 secondary schools in the Greater Cambridge area (<i>Reporting is termly, therefore three reporting rounds per year</i>)	19	19	G	3	19	21
Re-establishment of Cambridge Curriculum steering group (<i>further detail to be provided on this next quarter</i>)	To be confirmed					

- 2.2 More detail can be found in the Quarterly Progress Report (agenda item 6). As set out, where delivery has been less than expected that has generally been a result of demand being less than anticipated.
- 2.3 Current activity, delivered by Form the Future, is funded until 31 March 2025 at a cost of c£650k per year.
- 2.4 At the November 2025 Executive Board meeting it was agreed to 'procure a provider to enable the continuation of the GCP's skills work'. Following that, officers have been working with Cambridgeshire County Council colleagues to run a procurement process. Five bids were received and the process concluded at the end of January. Officers were able to select a preferred bidder and based on the assessment criteria, Form the Future was the winning bidder.
- 2.5 Should the Executive Board decide to appointment of Form the Future, the contract will be underway by 1 April 2025, avoiding any gap in delivery.
- 2.6 As agreed by the Executive Board, delivery will be based around the following key areas (KPI's to be developed as part of initial contract agreement):
- **Apprenticeships, training programmes and internships** – promote and support young people to secure these opportunities. Work directly with young people, educators, parents and employers to do so. KPI's to demonstrate numbers against three areas:
 - Apprenticeships.
 - Work experience placements.
 - Internships.
 - Activities to specifically focus on:
 - Awareness of opportunities.
 - Encouraging and supporting the application process.
 - Signposting employers to a wide range of training providers.
 - **Careers Guidance Secondary Schools** - offer careers and employability support to every child at a Greater Cambridge state secondary school.
 - **Careers Advice Primary Schools** – engage with all primary schools in Greater Cambridge to support them to embed careers awareness activities into the curriculum. To include an annual careers fair.
 - **Mentoring** – provide targeted support to children who are at risk of being 'Not in Education or Employment', through targeted mentoring arrangements.
 - **Engagement with parents/carers** – engage with parents/carers to inform, raise awareness and equip them to support their young people.
 - **Supporting staff** – through targeted activity, support and equip staff in educational environments with a detailed understanding of current and emerging work opportunities for their students.

3. Working with Partners

- 3.1 Since the inception of the GCP's current skills programme the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) has further refined its approach to skills delivery. GCP officers and CPCA officers have worked together to develop the above approach and also to look at how the above approach can be cultivated to broaden its reach across the wider CPCA area. CPCA colleagues are keen to explore if they can use the structure that has been developed to deliver this work to establish the foundations of a regional delivery framework.
- 3.2 GCP officers are keen to support the development of this work to look at the contribution and added value it can offer beyond the GCP's funding geography. The return on investment is likely to be greater if we can scale up the delivery of this work.
- 3.3 As is the case currently, officers will continue to work with CPCA colleagues to align these activities with any complementary existing activities being delivered by the CPCA. The Joint Assembly and Executive Board will be kept up to date on this work.

4. Options and Emerging Recommendations

- 4.1 As above, having completed a compliant procurement process officers suggest that the Joint Assembly comment on the following recommendations to be presented to the Executive Board:
- (a) To note the progress across the skills programme to date.
 - (b) To agree to appoint Form the Future to deliver the next phase of skills work.

5. Alignment with City Deal Objectives

- 5.1 The Skills programme is focused on ensuring the continued delivery of the key City Deal objectives. It both directly and indirectly supports these objectives:
- Accelerating delivery of 33,480 planned homes;
 - Delivering new Apprenticeships for young people; and
 - Creating 45,000 new jobs.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The cost of the next phase of work will be c£1.2m. All funding was allocated as part of the November 2024 budgeting exercise. No further funding is being requested at this stage.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance: Yes.
Name of Financial Officer: Mike Falconer.

7. Next Steps and Milestones

- 7.1 As above, should the Executive Board and Joint Assembly be supportive, Form the Future will be appointed to deliver the next phase of skills service, commencing 1 April 2025 for a period of two years.

Background Papers

Source Documents	Location
None	-