**Skills Update note: June 2020**

This paper is to provide an update on various areas of skills related work including:

1. **General LEP update and Covid-19 response**
2. **Remaining European Social Funding (ESF)**
3. **SELEP Skills Advisory Panels and refocusing the analytical toolkit**
4. **SELEP Digital Skills Partnership – Covid-19 response**
5. **Tutor recruitment bursary and campaign – extension proposal**
6. **National Retraining Scheme**
7. **General LEP update and Covid-19 response**

SELEP has a range of work underway currently:

* **Daily business briefings,** available on the SELEP website and which members can subscribe to at <https://www.southeastlep.com/news/newsletter-archive/> (scroll down to subscribe).
* **A business survey** has been undertaken to get input from SMEs across the SELEP area and which had had a good response rate. Results are available at <https://southeastbusiness.org.uk/coronavirus-guidance-for-employers/business-impact/>. A further business recovery survey has now been launched at <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/PNUW56/>
* **The Growth Hubs**are sharing a wide range of information and responding to queries. Further information at <https://southeastbusiness.org.uk/>. This incudes a Covid-19 support section which is updated regularly.
* **Ministers and MPs**– A meeting with local MPs was held on 24th April and regular engagement is also happening with Ministers through SELEP’s Chair and Vice Chairs. This has enabled feedback through groups such as the Skills Advisory Panel, SELEP Working Groups and the business survey.
* **Main SELEP Board**– the SELEP Board had a virtual board meeting on 17th April, which was its first in a new formation including new business members. Minutes and a recording of the meeting are available at <https://www.southeastlep.com/meetings/strategic-board/>.
* The Friday 12th June SELEP meeting considered an extension of the Tutor Bursary Programme and a potential **£2m pot to support skills to address Covid-19 impact**. Both were endorsed and the process for the skills pot will be confirmed soon. The agenda and pack can be viewed at <https://www.southeastlep.com/meetings/strategic-board-12th-june-2020/> .
* **Gathering intelligence**– there is a current focus on gathering intelligence to review the impact on the economy, developing a response and assisting with recovery. This will include a review of the LEP’s Local Industrial Strategy.
* **Apprenticeships -** a letter was sent by the national LEP Network to highlight challenges with apprenticeship funding, which originated from a SELEP letter following SCTP highlighting issues. This was then raised nationally by SELEP’s Chair Chris Brodie which confirmed that all LEPs had similar concerns. The Provider Relief Scheme has since been introduced. There may be remaining issues such as levy funded training and the Skills Working Group has agreed for a SELEP letter to be drafted capturing the likely impact on apprenticeships and decline in numbers.
* **Support for individuals now on website**– A new leaflet for main support available to individuals is now available on the SELEP website at <https://www.southeastlep.com/our-strategy/skills/support-and-opportunities/>. An editable version of this is available if local partners would like to add their own local support and logo.

1. **Remaining European Social Funding (ESF) update**

* The ESF national Reserve fund had been open to SELEP to put business cases forward for. This has now been reallocated to respond to Covid-19. Further detail is awaited on how this will be administered. This does not impact upon calls for tender that were already underway in the SELEP area such as ‘Driving Apprenticeship Growth’ and ‘Enabling Progression in Entry Level Jobs’ which are being evaluated.
* SELEP has sent a letter to the Department for Work and Pensions (who manage all ESF) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to express concern at current delays with ESF.

* The **Wheels to Work and Training** call has an extended deadline to allow more time to apply given Covid-19 challenges. The deadline was 30th June 2020. Further information at <https://www.gov.uk/european-structural-investment-funds/wheels-to-work-and-training-in-south-east-lep-oc30s20p1728> .
* Ahead of confirmation on the ESF Reserve Fund process, there is a short window (exact timings not known) to **put forward business cases for ESF Calls to respond to Covid-19.** This would be considered by DWP so isn’t guaranteed.

1. **Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) and refocusing analytical toolkit** 
   * The Skills Advisory Panel had an online meeting on 23rd April and also 25th June. This enabled feedback from employers including Berry Gardens, BT, Konica Minolta, Stansted Airport, Oakdown House Care Home, Morgan Sindall, Screen South and HSBC. Some employers are continuing to recruit and adapting to home working or current increased / reduced demand. Mental health of staff was raised as an area of concern. The June meeting enabled a discussion about the £2million Skills Fund. Full feedback will be available in the meeting minutes, to be published soon at <https://www.southeastlep.com/our-delivery/skills/skills-advisory-panel/>.
   * A letter introducing the panel had been planned to send to government. This will be updated to reflect the current situation for members in the Covid-19 situation. A DfE colleague joined the April meeting and will feed back areas of concern also. This included end point assessments for which new flexibilities have since been introduced.
   * There will be a virtual SAP and Digital Skills Partnership conference on 8th October for which there will also be the launch of some materials setting out key sectors. Further information and registration details will be shared soon. A meeting for all Southern LEP SAP Chairs will also be held in July to share best practice.
   * It is a DfE requirement to produce an analytical toolkit and Skills report by April 2021. This has currently been refocused to capture the short-term impact of Covid-19 on jobs, benefits and related issues. This will soon be updated regularly and shared on the SELEP website.
   * A second year of funding has been confirmed for the panel, to April 2021.
2. **SELEP Digital Skills Partnership (DSP)**
   * The SELEP DSP is one of 6 nationally, funded through the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and involving joint working with them.
   * The DSP has been responding to current challenges and ensuring that various groups have access to online information and learning. This includes resources for businesses and their staff (<https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2020/04/SMEInfo.pdf>), resources for students, educators, young people and parents (<https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2020/05/EduInfo0505.pdf>) and resources for individuals and furloughed staff (<https://www.southeastlep.com/app/uploads/2020/05/CommunityInfo0405.pdf>).
   * There is a current proposal to work with existing organisations to support, for example, with the purchase of kit and access to the internet. A lot of work is already happening nationally with organisations such as <https://futuredotnow.uk/devicesdotnow/> This will be confirmed soon and will be accompanied by an ask of partners across the area for any unused kit to support.
   * The DSP now has 5 working groups focusing on the various areas of focus. Colleagues can sign up to be part of these at [https://www.signupgenius.com/go/904054dafa82fabfe3-south](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.signupgenius.com%2Fgo%2F904054dafa82fabfe3-south&data=02%7C01%7C%7Ce4d2063e4c5f457afa1408d80d47875b%7Ca8b4324f155c4215a0f17ed8cc9a992f%7C0%7C0%7C637273948157978339&sdata=yiRQoFYEjARkjcXiq4W%2BuVxttaXDbmFcZRz%2FnDscV5U%3D&reserved=0).
   * There was a meeting on 30th June which is available to view at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUGkBO1tYRQ> . The SME working group also held a webinar on 9th July ‘Stay Visible, Stay Viable, Stay Profitable’ soon available to view at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkA5bGNj1ss8Xm4OjM1Va6g> and the trailer is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-XJtOOgw8I>
   * ‘Digital Boost’ was launched on 9th June, matching SMEs and charities with free digital support from volunteer experts. As a DSP area, SELEP has been feeding in links to local support (including colleges) and information also. Further information at <https://www.digitalboost.org.uk/>
   * Further information is available at <https://www.southeastlep.com/our-delivery/digital-skills-partnership/>
3. **Tutor recruitment bursary and campaign – extension proposal** 
   * The Tutor Bursary programme has been very well received with over 97 bursaries funded to date, far exceeding targets. This has now been opened up to level 3 teacher training and a series of videos showcasing local tutors launched with the website [https://www.becomealecturer.org/](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.becomealecturer.org%2F&data=02%7C01%7C%7C4968551c433b4d7d1d4a08d7a4c5e25b%7Ca8b4324f155c4215a0f17ed8cc9a992f%7C0%7C1%7C637159042130116341&sdata=NrJSeW5Uv5ACmxAK%2BEmkrr9Kd2Fx2EQp4JF1togBBsE%3D&reserved=0).
   * The Skills Working Group (supported by local Boards) has been successful in a proposal to extend this programme. This has also considered the impact of Covid-19 on encouraging individuals to consider new careers where they may have been made redundant and assisting with the move to increased online learning. This was endorsed by KMEP on 3rd June before going to the main LEP Board on 12th June. Due to the LEP Board running over time, this was agreed by electronic procedure.
4. **National Retraining Scheme**

The 23rd April SELEP Skills Working Group included representation from the DfE’s National Retraining Scheme team (observing). The DfE had spoken to SELEP about being a potential pilot area earlier in the year, which would have involved local workshops to explore further. This was postponed until after local elections and now the Covid-19 challenges may mean a re-focus. Members noted that any scheme would need to be flexible, easy to access and supporting individuals into work. Conversations and feedback have continued with DfE in recent weeks.