

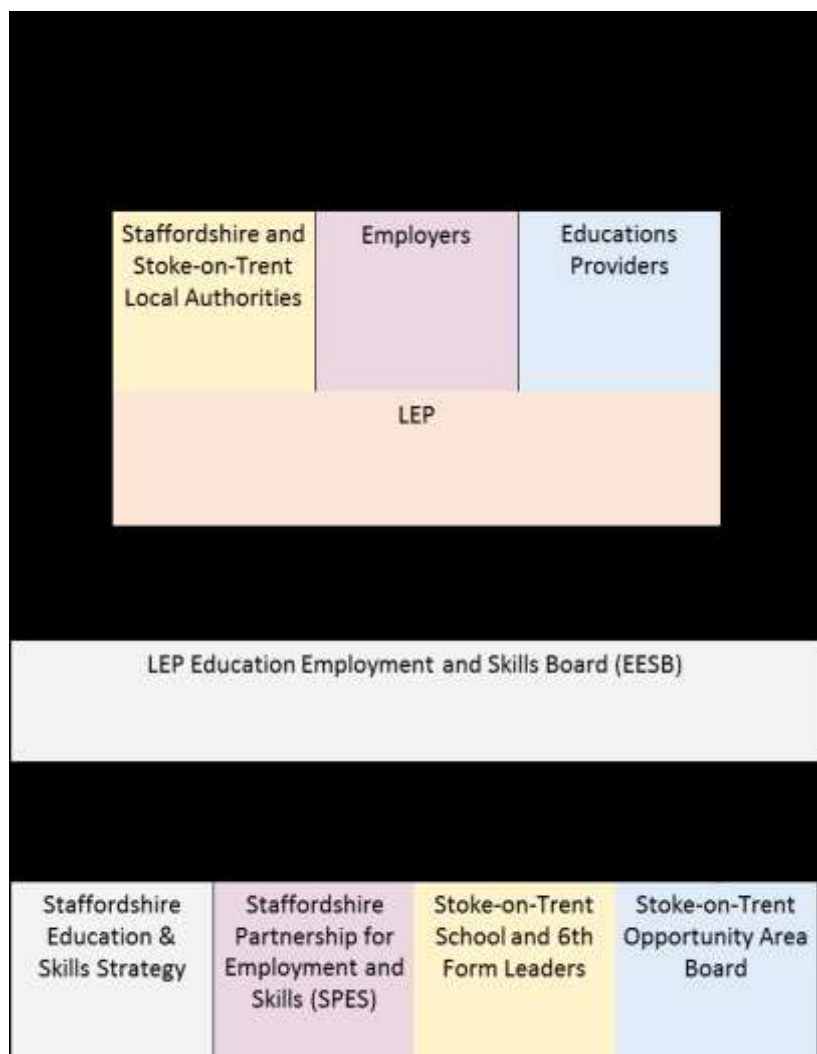
Education, Skills and Employment Group (ESEG)

A series of three employer breakfasts across the LEP area have been hosted to engage business in discussing skills issues and challenges. The events were also used to target employers in seeking securing future engagement in the Group and help in shaping the LEP response to skills agenda and delivering its Skills strategy.

Overall, we have nine business leaders who expressed an interest in being involved with the LEP and these include: AMRICC, Dermal Technology Lab Ltd, Woolcool Pathway Group, Michelin, Alton Towers, Learn by Design, Key Training, . In addition, following dialogue with the STP Workforce Board they have expressed an interest in working more closely with the LEP and being engaged in the ESEG. We are collating the content of the events for a response back to attendees in an action plan.

Securing employer feedback is important for the LEP as it will help in establishing a local Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) that the government has committed to in the Industrial Strategy. SAPs will be established in every area by the end of this parliament and are intended to bring together local employers, providers and other stakeholders whilst working with national government to inform skills policy and delivery. This would include support and data analysis sharing with LEPs around skills. Further details on SAPs has been developed and is awaiting ministerial sign off and we are expecting this to be published in the Autumn.

The first meeting for the ESEG has now been set and will take place on the 6th September and representatives are now being sort for the meeting from stakeholders.



ESF Opt-in Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

An expression of interest has been submitted to the ESFA to opt-in for a second round of ESF training and skills provision. ESIF committee agreed that we would work with the Agency to draft specifications for the ITTs. Overall, the opt-in partnerships are delivering results with over 12,300 participants starting the programme and almost 4,000 having progressed into work, apprenticeships or improved their skills. The benefits of the opt-in approach are that the Agency manages the procurement and the contracts and provides the match funding.

The four areas of investment will require investment of £14.5 million and deliver an estimated additional 9,600 participants on the programme. ESFA have reduced the average unit cost of the programmes and should provide better value for money and be more in line with the ESIF ESF Operating Programme. The procurement is expected to be complete and new contracts in place for April 2019 when the current programme ends.

The indicative funding attached to each of the proposed four programmes are:

- Skills Support for the Unemployed: £2,000,000
- NEET (not in education, employment or training) support: £5,000,000
- Community Grants: £1,000,000
- Skills Support for the Workforce: £5,000,000

Next steps are to formally seek the approval of the ESIF committee for the opt-in with the ESFA.

In addition, we are awaiting for the MA to award the contract for the Skills Hub brokerage service and we will be seeking a single Open Call for Higher Level Skills for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire with a revised specification..