

Kent and Medway Employment Plan

Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on employment in Kent and Medway. Between March and October 2020, unemployment rose by 109%, to over 69,000. A further rise in unemployment is anticipated, and it is likely that unemployment will remain relatively high, even after a return to output growth. Impacts will also be uneven, and are likely to be especially severe among those who already have weaker positions in the labour market, or who are working in sectors facing especially large contractions in demand.

In response, the Kent and Medway Employment Task Force has been established to identify and progress actions that will mitigate the extent and impact of unemployment and under-employment. It brings together political leaders and partners in education, business and employment support, together with the Department for Work and Pensions, to add value to the extensive range of measures that have been brought forward by central Government and ensure that local partners work together and maximise existing resources.

This Employment Plan sets out the Task Force's priorities, focused on:

- **Supporting young people into work**, maximising benefits from the Government's Kickstart scheme and ensuring that delivery partners in Kent and Medway work together; developing a network of hubs where young people facing barriers to employment can access work and skills advice; exploring new opportunities for work-based learning in the context of weaker industry demand; and increasing opportunities to access higher education.
- **Supporting the existing workforce**, especially older workers experiencing unemployment or at risk of redundancy. This includes coordination of the Adult Education Budget across Kent and Medway to increase access to digital skills, and access to careers advice and guidance as workers change sector and occupation.
- **Responding to redundancy**, to mitigate the impacts of redundancy programmes where they occur, by encouraging use of Jobcentre Plus's Rapid Response Service and delivering advice to business via the Kent and Medway Growth Hub.
- **Driving future demand**, through the business support and investment measures proposed in the Kent and Medway Renewal and Resilience Plan, promoting local employment as firms expand and new projects come forward, and developing a more robust understanding of labour supply and demand as we plan for the future.

1. Introduction

The employment crisis and the Employment Task Force

- 1.1. The economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been severe. Unemployment has risen rapidly since public health measures were first imposed in March 2020. Bold measures have been taken nationally to mitigate the effects of the crisis and there was some evidence of the unemployment rate plateauing in September and October. But the employment outlook is very challenging, especially in the light of a ‘second wave’ of the virus and associated restrictions. In the short term, we have seen significant labour market disruption, as some sectors have been restricted and general demand has weakened. The longer-term impacts are also likely to be significant, as the crisis accelerates structural shifts in the economy and employment demand lags behind a return to output growth.
- 1.2. In August, Kent and Medway Economic Partnership published an **Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan**, setting out a medium-term framework to support the economy through the pandemic and into recovery. Alongside actions supporting business growth and investment, *Renewal and Resilience* recognised the central challenge of rising unemployment, and highlighted the need to take “urgent and coordinated action”.
- 1.3. In response, political leaders and partners in education, business and employment support (including the Department for Work and Pensions) have come together to establish a **Kent and Medway Employment Task Force** to identify and progress actions that will mitigate the extent and impact of unemployment and under-employment¹. Task-oriented and time-limited, the Task Force recognises the scale of the challenge and the complexity of the employment landscape, as well as the unpredictability of the current pandemic – but it also recognises the need to work together at pace to ensure that we can respond most effectively.

Developing the Employment Plan

- 1.4. This **Employment Plan** sets out an initial statement of the Task Force’s priorities. It identifies the key themes on which local partnership activity will be focused, providing a framework for collaboration, information and resource sharing and the development of new initiatives and solutions. As the nature of the crisis evolves, it will be regularly reviewed and updated.
- 1.5. Underpinning the Plan, we have identified four key principles to guide our activity:
 - **Adding value to the ‘national spine’:** The crisis has led to unprecedented intervention by national Government. This includes a series of measures to prevent and manage higher levels of unemployment, summarised in Section 3 of this Plan. The Government’s delivery approach is primarily via national mechanisms, especially through DWP and Jobcentre Plus, and there are few *formal* arrangements for devolved coordination at local level. But effective delivery will rely on local insight and knowledge, joint working between local and national partners and a collaborative approach. At the heart of this Employment Plan, we want to ensure that activities

¹ A list of the members of the Employment Task Force and a summary of its terms of reference are attached at Annex 1.

avoid duplication, complement the support that is already available and ensure maximum benefit for people and businesses in Kent and Medway.

- **Maximising the value of existing resources:** In aggregate, there are substantial resources allocated to employment support across Kent and Medway. In line with the collaborative approach set out above, we want to ensure that they are used as effectively as possible, using evidence to understand where there are gaps and how partners can fill them.
- **Short-term action; longer term view:** The Task Force is a time-limited body, and our focus is clearly on the measures that should be taken to respond to a real and present crisis. But short-term interventions should be made in the context of longer-term strategy. This means (for example) that temporary work placements should lead to longer-term employment and opportunities for training and skills development; and activity should be informed by a clearer understanding of future demand and opportunities for growth. While this Plan is not a 'skills strategy' (which would necessarily have a wider remit), we anticipate that the work of the Task Force could help to inform skills planning linked with employment demand in the longer term.
- **Building on existing strategy:** The *Renewal and Resilience Plan* provides an overall framework for the Employment Plan. We want to ensure that actions to support employment help to drive the key *Renewal and Resilience* principles:

Key principles for Renewal and Resilience

- **Greener Futures:** We aim to develop an economy which is more sustainable in the long term, contributing to net-zero emissions by 2050 and increasing employment opportunities in lower-carbon industries and technologies.
- **Productive and Open:** In the long run, the economy will only grow through increased productivity. Employment interventions should help to promote skills development and increased technology capabilities – and we welcome and encourage industry-led solutions.
- **Better Opportunities; Fairer Chances:** The worst impacts of recession are often on those with the weakest position in the labour market. We want to ensure that access to employment is linked with longer-term prospects and that the most disadvantaged are not left behind.

Plan structure

1.6. The remainder of this Plan is structured in three sections:

- Section 2 provides an overview of the scale of the employment crisis and the measures that have been taken to mitigate it
- Section 3 sets out our proposed priorities for action, focused on supporting young people into work; supporting the existing workforce; enabling industry responses; and developing and driving future demand for the longer term
- Section 4 outlines our next steps in taking the Employment Plan forward, including approaches to measuring success and preparing future iterations of the Plan.

2. The scale of the crisis

Before the crisis...

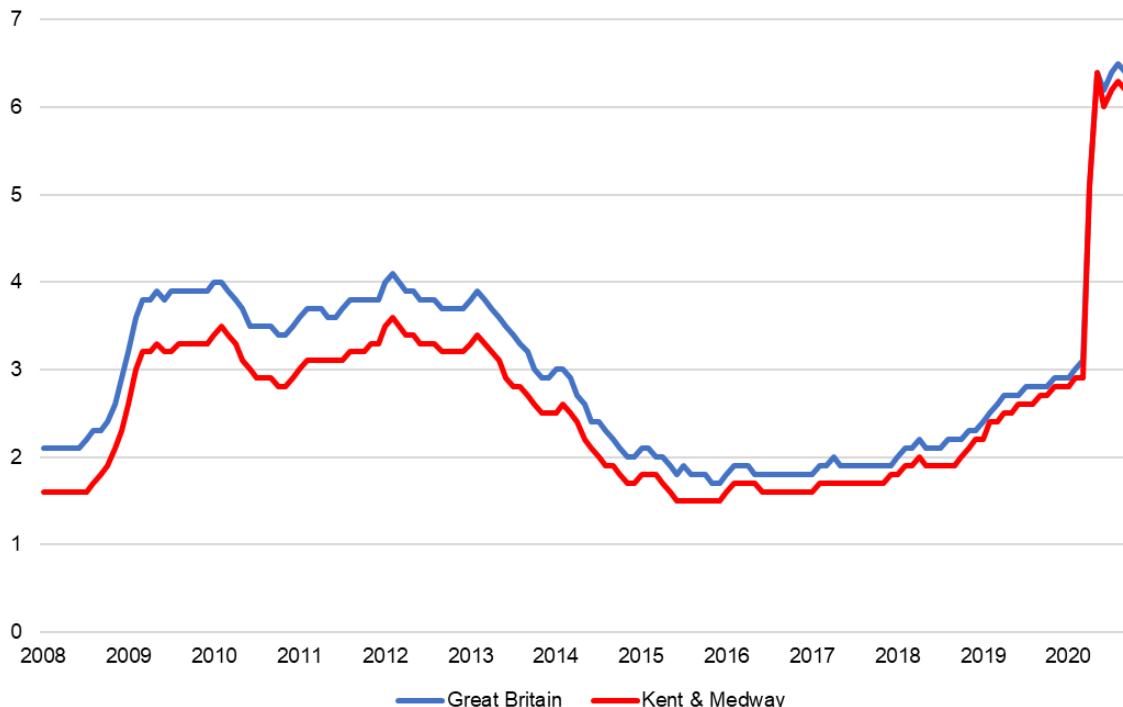
- 2.1. Before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, **Kent and Medway's employment performance had been relatively strong in recent years**. In the five years to 2018, the total number of jobs increased by around 7.5% to 858,000 across a diverse sectoral base, with the county also benefiting from growth in the London jobs market. Unemployment had been at historically low levels for some time: in February 2020, the claimant count rate was 2.9%, slightly lower than the Great Britain average. Recent productivity growth had been modest, the county's workforce skills profile somewhat underperformed the national average and both these issues were recognised as important strategic challenges – but on the whole, the labour market was generally buoyant.

The impact of the crisis

Headline impacts

- 2.2. Against this backdrop, **the need to impose public health restrictions to counter Covid-19 has led to a significant employment shock**. Between March and September, the claimant count in Kent and Medway rose by 119%, from around 33,000 to 72,000 (although it fell back slightly to 69,000 in October). This rate of increase was much sharper than the rise in unemployment after the financial crash, with the September claimant count rate at a level last seen in 1994.

Figure 1: Unemployment (claimant count as % of population aged 16-64), 2008-20



Source: ONS, DWP

2.3. **While the rise in unemployment has been substantial, it would have been greater were it not for the job subsidy measures taken by the Government** in the early stages of the pandemic. The Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme (CJRS), which enabled employers to furlough staff with up to 80% of pay contributed by Government; and the Self Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS). At the end of July, around 244,000 'employments' had been furloughed in Kent and Medway, with a further 106,000 self-employed people supported through the SEISS to the end of September. The number of furloughed workers fell after restrictions were eased in the summer and the scheme has tapered down, although the scheme was extended (at the maximum Government contribution level as the previous scheme) to coincide with the reimposition of national restrictions at the start of November.

Sectoral impacts

2.4. The sectoral impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic have varied substantially between sectors, with the sharpest falls in output so far occurring in those sectors that have been most vulnerable to public health restrictions, especially hospitality and arts; entertainment and leisure; and retail and wholesale (as well as in construction). This is reflected in employment, with firms in these sectors especially likely to take advantage of the furlough scheme and some large Kent businesses with exposure to the travel and tourism sector (such as P&O and Saga) announcing major redundancies.

2.5. Three issues are worth highlighting in relation to the employment impacts on different sectors:

- First, some of the most severely impacted sectors, such as retail and hospitality have traditionally been relatively labour-intensive and have tended to be important sources of lower wage and entry-level jobs. The likelihood is that lower-income workers will be disproportionately impacted by unemployment and temporary furlough arrangements, and that reduced entry-level jobs will disproportionately impact younger people joining the labour market².
- Second, the pandemic is likely to lead to some structural, as well as temporary, changes in labour demand: for example, the crisis has accelerated trends towards online retailing and home working that were already emerging, driven by technology. Although the picture is still uncertain, the likelihood is that the shape of the economy (and the jobs required) will be somewhat different from before. This will be further advanced in some sectors by a continued shift towards automation, which may itself be a means of building resilience to health-related shocks³.
- Third, despite the poor general climate for employment and a fall in advertised vacancies, there were still around 48,000 unique job vacancies in Kent and Medway in July and August this year. The highest number were in nursing, care, driving, teaching and cleaning, with (unsurprisingly) a continued decline in catering and hospitality. So while overall, the current crisis is a crisis of demand, there are still supply-side challenges in enabling workers to change sectors and occupations in response to dislocation.

² Institute for Fiscal Studies (2020), Briefing Note BN278, *Sector shutdowns during the coronavirus crisis: Which workers are most exposed?*

³ RSA (October 2020), *Who is at risk? Work and automation in the time of Covid-19*

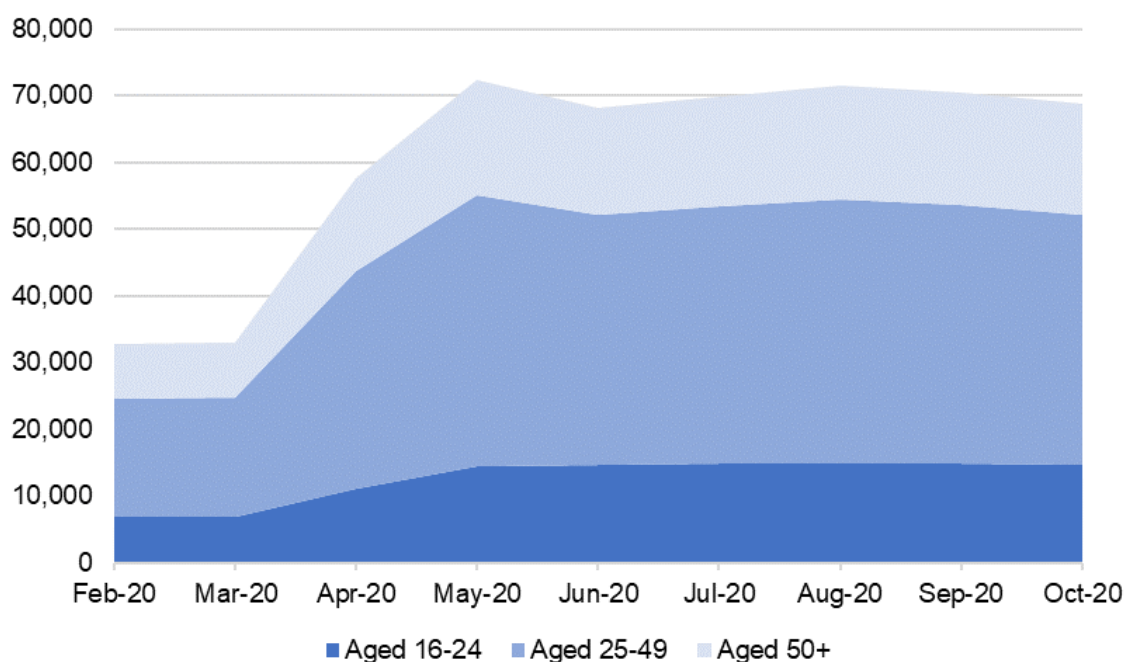
Spatial impacts

- 2.6. Kent and Medway's economy is diverse, and this diversity is reflected in the spatial distribution of employment impacts so far. Every local authority area in the county has experienced a sharp rise in unemployment – but claimant count rates are substantially higher in Thanet and, to a lesser extent, other coastal and estuarial districts than elsewhere in Kent and Medway: currently, the claimant count rate in Thanet is around 10% - among the highest in the country. This reinforces pre-existing disparities (and reflects relatively high levels of employment in sectors such as hospitality), and highlights a need for locally-focused solutions.

Age-related impacts

- 2.7. Unemployment has risen sharply in all age groups since March. However, evidence from previous recessions suggests that younger workers and new entrants to the labour market are likely to be especially at risk of unemployment as the crisis continues. Younger workers are also especially vulnerable to longer term 'scarring', with periods out of work at the start of their career affecting job and wage prospects in future years⁴. This has informed the focus of several recent Government initiatives on support for young people (for example the new Kickstart scheme).

Figure 2: Claimant count by age, Kent and Medway



Source: DWP

- 2.8. However, there are also specific challenges facing older workers, especially those that are faced with career change. Research for DWP highlights employer perceptions and digital skills barriers as particular challenges, with those aged 50+ and facing redundancy recognised as a priority group by Jobcentre Plus⁵. Potentially, the risks to older workers could be greater than in previous

⁴ Resolution Foundation (2020), *Class of 2020: Education leavers in the current crisis*

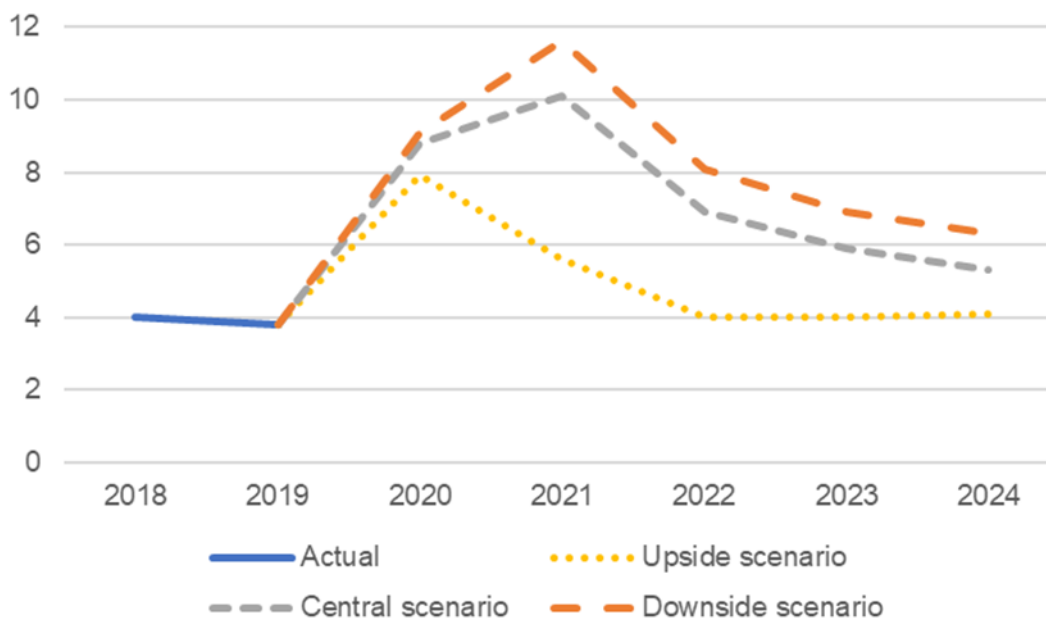
⁵ DWP (2015), *Fuller Working Lives: 50+*

recessions, given the later state pension age and the increasing tendency for people to work past retirement age.

The future employment outlook

- 2.9. Earlier this year, the Office for Budget Responsibility prepared a series of scenarios for the UK economy in the light of the Covid-19 crisis. All three anticipate a sharp rise in unemployment in 2020, although in the central and 'downside' scenarios, unemployment continues to rise in 2021, and remains above the rate at the start of the pandemic even after five years:

Figure 3: Future unemployment scenarios (UK unemployment rate, %)



Source: OBR

- 2.10. These scenarios are indicative and were prepared before the second wave of Covid-19 infections⁶. But they reflect experience from previous recessions, which saw continued high rates of unemployment, even after the economy returned to growth. The likelihood is that headline unemployment will rise further – perhaps substantially – over the coming months and will remain higher than 'normal' for some time.

Refreshing the economic data

Further analysis of the impact of Covid-19 on the Kent and Medway economy is set out in the [Economic Impacts Evidence Base](#), published alongside the Renewal and Resilience Plan. This will be updated later in the autumn. Latest data for Kent and Medway is published on the [Covid-19 Economic Recovery Dashboard](#).

⁶ The OBR will publish revised economic analysis in November

The national response

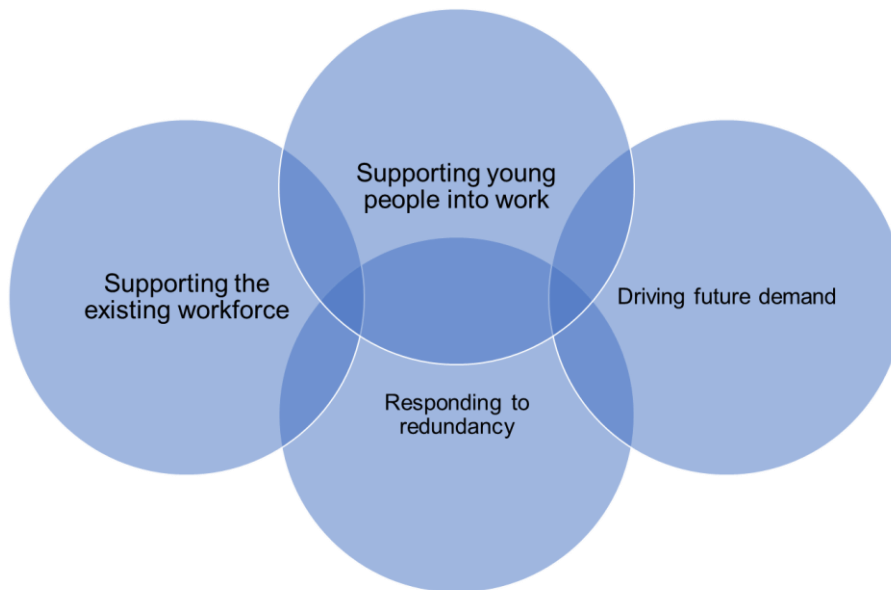
2.11. Against this outlook, the Government has put in place a suite of employment support measures. These are set out in Annex B: in summary, they include:

- **Subsidy schemes to retain existing employment**, principally the extended Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which helps businesses to retain employees in conditions of low demand or when premises have been forced to close) and the extended Self Employed Income Support Scheme.
- **Measures to directly subsidise new employment**, principally the Kickstart scheme, which offers six-month work placements for those aged 16-24 in receipt of Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. Organisations have been invited to come forward to act as 'gateways' to the Kickstart scheme, supporting smaller employers: several have applied in Kent and Medway (including Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, West Kent Partnership and CXK), and a list of approved organisations is likely to be published shortly.
- **Measures linking employment and training**, including Apprenticeships, Traineeships and Sector-Based Work Academies
- **Careers advice and employment support**, including services offered via the National Careers Service (delivered in Kent and Medway by CXK) and job-finding and other support services delivered by Jobcentre Plus.

2.12. The national response represents a substantial expansion of activity in a short period of time. Supporting and adding value to the national offer, alongside delivery of wider actions to support business growth and investment should help to mitigate the challenges we face in the short to medium term, and contribute to our broader strategy for Renewal and Resilience.

3. Priorities for action

- 3.1. Looking ahead to the next 12-18 months, our focus will be on four priority areas for action, all of which are of equal importance:



Supporting young people into work

The case for action

- 3.2. Unemployment among people aged 18-24 increased by 121% in Kent and Medway between March and September. Young people⁷ are often disproportionately impacted by unemployment during recession, given the difficulty of entering a weak labour market without experience – and experience at the start of working life can leave ‘scarring’ effects on wages and career prospects lasting several years.
- 3.3. The nature of the current crisis also presents specific challenges: many entry-level jobs in hospitality, retail and customer service are restricted (either through legislation or lack of demand). The volume of Apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities has also fallen, and although not yet visible in the data, there is also a risk of more young people becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training).

Key actions

- 3.4. **Making Kickstart work:** Kickstart is at the centre of the Government’s efforts to ensure access to employment for young people, and it is important that we maximise the benefits for jobseekers and employers in Kent and Medway:

⁷ Age definitions vary, although our primary focus in this section of the Employment Plan is on people aged 18-24.

- With an economy dominated by SMEs, 'Gateway' organisations will be important in aggregating demand and providing a clear and simple service to businesses. **We will seek to ensure that Gateway organisations in Kent and Medway work together**, exchange information, signpost to each other where relevant and share best operational practice. We will also provide a clear guide to approved Gateway organisations in the county, so that businesses can make an informed choice.
- **Public sector partners will lead by example** in offering high quality placements linked with longer term opportunities.
- The Government funding for Kickstart placements will pay the National Minimum Wage (plus National Insurance and auto-enrolment costs) for up to 25 hours per week. While some employers may choose to top this up to full-time hours, many will be unable to do so. However, there is an **opportunity to enable young people on Kickstart placements to access training** in the remaining time. The Task Force, working with our further education colleges will explore the potential for this and other flexibilities.
- Alongside promotion and coordination of Kickstart, partners (including Gateway organisations) will promote a wider range of opportunities to employers, including the Traineeship and Apprenticeship incentives offered by Government through the *Plan for Jobs*.

- 3.5. **Establishing a network of Youth Hubs:** Jobcentre Plus is seeking to develop new partnerships to deliver 'youth hubs' in community settings. These aim to provide employability and skills advice to young people with significant barriers to employment, with access to specialist advisory teams, linked with a wider range of support services. Jobcentre Plus is already providing youth hub services in conjunction with Medway Council via a facility in Chatham: there is interest elsewhere across the county, and we will seek to promote and build on this, establishing the youth hub concept across the county. Looking to the longer term, we will work with DWP to support the youth hub sustainability, developing partnerships using existing programmes, organisations and resources.
- 3.6. **Exploring new opportunities for work-based learning in the context of reduced industry demand:** The reduction in work-based learning opportunities presents a long-term economic problem for Kent and Medway businesses, as well as an immediate problem for learners, especially those who might otherwise be NEET. Reducing the skills pipeline now will also have negative economic consequences in the future. Working with industry associations, businesses and the community and voluntary sector, the FE sector will explore new approaches to raising demand in the short term.
- 3.7. **Increasing access to further and higher education,** including through the increased provision of short courses that can build up credits over time, helping people to gain university education during a weak labour market.
- 3.8. **Promoting and coordinating access to good quality information, advice and guidance in schools:** Schools have a central role in providing information to school leavers about career options and the various initiatives designed to help them enter the labour market, working in conjunction with the careers adviser network. They are also at the forefront of developing opportunities to support virtual work experience. We will support this role through the provision of strengthened labour market information.

Supporting the existing workforce

The case for action

- 3.9. As Section 2 set out, unemployment has risen sharply in all age groups, and despite a strong national policy focus on younger workers, older age groups account for the great majority of the unemployed. Older workers in particular are more likely to face challenges associated with a lack of digital skills (especially where these have not been a requirement in previous employment), and the wider impacts of unemployment on household incomes and living standards are likely to be significant. Given the differential sectoral impacts of the crisis, some people may find it difficult to access new work in the same sector, so developing and applying transferable skills will be important.

Key actions

- 3.10. **Coordinating the use of the Adult Education Budget:** The Adult Education Budget is an important source of funding for provision to help people gain the skills they need for progression in work, especially in support of digital skills. We will explore ways in which the use of the AEB can be better coordinated across adult education providers (including Kent County Council, Medway Council and the further education sector), so that available provision can be better promoted and linked with economic need, and so that potential beneficiaries can be better signposted. In the longer term, a strong track record in partnership development and coordination will support the development of proposals for greater local control over the use of the fund.
- 3.11. **Promoting and coordinating access to advice, guidance and support:** The National Careers Service, managed in Kent and Medway through CXK, offers advice and guidance to people of all ages. Task Force members will actively promote the service in the context of a wider number of people facing career change decisions.

Supporting skills and prosperity in the medium term

Some new approaches accelerated as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic could be developed further as part of a wider strategy for the medium-to-long term. For example, experience of working remotely and the greater number of modular courses could lead to new opportunities to develop work-based CPD and Higher and Degree Apprenticeships.

To understand the scale of the opportunity and to plan to meet business need, will identify the range of provision currently available to support professional development across Kent and Medway, and will work with business to promote existing programmes and identify gaps and new ideas.

Responding to redundancy

The case for action

- 3.12. The Job Support Scheme should help to reduce the number of businesses that are forced to make people redundant to a loss of demand or forced closure. But we have already seen redundancies at some major firms in Kent, and in the event of a prolonged downturn, further job

losses are likely to be inevitable. We want to ensure that firms making redundancies work with Jobcentre Plus and other partners to make sure that support is in place for those leaving employment.

Key actions

- 3.13. **Leveraging the role of the Growth Hub:** Through the Kent and Medway Growth Hub's Business Support Helpline, we will promote take-up of measures to incentivise employment and we will provide advice to firms seeking redundancy support.
- 3.14. **Promoting the Rapid Response Service:** Jobcentre Plus offers a Rapid Response Service to employers and their employees facing redundancy situations. This involves help to employees in applying for alternative employment and accessing benefits and training. We will ensure that employers are aware of and are able to access the service and we will seek to secure feedback so that it can be developed further in the future.

Driving future demand

The case for action

- 3.15. The actions set out above are all focused on the supply side: providing services to individuals so that they can access employment and advice to employers so that they can better engage with the services that are available. However, the current crisis is fundamentally a crisis of demand, driven by necessary restrictions on activity and by investor and consumer uncertainty. As well as mitigating the impacts of unemployment, we need to retain and generate demand for new employment, especially in sectors with strong prospects for growth.

Key actions

- 3.16. **Promoting business growth and investment:** The Renewal and Resilience Plan sets out a series of measures to support wider economic recovery, especially in relation to business support (access to business advice and guidance, financial support for innovation, attracting and retaining investment, and so on). While these form part of a wider economic development agenda, their successful delivery will obviously impact on employment prospects. At the same time, major projects in Kent and Medway will lead to further employment demand. Without duplicating activity elsewhere, the Task Force will maintain an awareness of wider opportunities for growth in the economy, and in addition will:
- **Promote best practice in securing local employment** when new job-creating schemes come forward – for example, by encouraging expanding employers to advertise vacancies through Jobcentre Plus, create Apprenticeships, take advantage of schemes such as Kickstart, and so on.
 - **Ensure that employers have access to information about the skills and employment support opportunities that are available to them.** Over the course of the pandemic, the Covid-19 Support Helpline delivered through Kent and Medway Growth Hub has been an invaluable source of information and support to business. We will work to expand the remit of this service, so that the complex range of employment support products can be clearly explained, navigated and promoted, with clearer referral routes.

- **Support engagement between employers and providers**, leveraging the value of the business connections of the Chamber, other business representative organisations and the local authorities.

Industry-led initiatives

3.17. Although much of the focus of the actions in this Employment Plan is on public sector-led interventions to support business, the Task Force seeks to support industry-led solutions to secure a supply of skilled employees. Work is underway in the horticultural and creative sectors to develop approaches to securing a retaining talent by identifying complementary needs across a series of businesses in the sector and working with further education and other partners to help meet these. We will identify opportunities for similar approaches in other sectors, and will explore the potential for establishing Group Training Agencies or similar industry-led mechanisms in Kent.

Looking to the future and better understanding demand and supply

- 3.18. Finally, looking to the longer term, there is a need for a better shared understanding of future employment demand, and how this could influence the need for skills and qualifications and inform the career choices that people make.
- 3.19. To inform this, we will commission a new edition of the Kent and Medway Workforce Skills Evidence Base, setting out a qualitative and quantitative assessment of future workforce needs. This will take account of technology and structural changes in the past few years (some of which have been accelerated by the pandemic), as well as key projects and new investments in the county, and will help to inform the next stage of strategy development.
- 3.20. In the meantime, we recognise that the wider economic picture is changing fast. At the same time as focusing on longer-term employment opportunities, we must be flexible in responding to changing data and new sources of intelligence.

4. Moving forward

Measuring progress

- 4.1. Given the scale of the crisis and its potential impacts on people and businesses, the Employment Task Force seeks to ensure rapid progress in taking forward the areas for action identified in this Plan.
- 4.2. Alongside regular reports on progress, it will also maintain oversight of the 'bigger picture', in understanding (for example) local take-up of the support measures made available through central Government, identifying any barriers and working through ways in which these can be overcome. To support this, we will work to improve access to performance intelligence (as opposed to raw monitoring data) so that this can be used to inform oversight and make sure that local action is directed in the most productive way.
- 4.3. As part of this, we will seek to define some metrics that can be used to provide an accessible and meaningful indication of progress (ensuring that in doing so, we use existing monitoring systems and data rather than creating new processes).

Reviewing the Plan

- 4.4. We will keep this Plan under review. As the Covid-19 response evolves, it is highly likely that new Government measures will be introduced, and existing ones adapted. We will be flexible and agile and will respond accordingly, in line with the principles outlined at the start of this Plan.

The longer term: Developing an exit strategy

- 4.5. The current crisis has highlighted the need for a better coordinated approach to employment and skills, and the Employment Task Force has a key role in galvanising activity and bringing partners together. While this Plan – and the Task Force – is rightly focused on the immediate response to rising unemployment, many of the challenges that we need to tackle require longer term intervention, to ensure that the workforce is equipped to take advantage of – and drive – the economic opportunities of the future.
- 4.6. Over time, we anticipate that greater inter-agency collaboration will become an *outcome* of the Task Force, as well as a *process*: building on the work of the Task Force, we aim to create a lasting 'employment coalition' grounded in practical action and a better mutual understanding of what each partner can do. As well as developing a clearer understanding of future employment demand linked with the economic development strategy for the county, this will also include responding to the forthcoming Skills White Paper and exploring opportunities for investment in skills development – and potentially seeking additional freedoms and flexibilities where we have demonstrated partnership delivery capability and clear business cases.

Annex A: Kent and Medway Employment Task Force membership

- Roger Gough (Chair) Kent County Council
- Alan Brookes Kent Association of Head Teachers
- Rodney Chambers Medway Council
- Simon Cook Mid-Kent College
- Professor Karen Cox University of Kent
- Carol Ford
- Sir Roger Gale MP
- Damian Green MP
- Nicolas Heslop Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
- Jo James Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce
- Sarah Kennett Department for Work and Pensions
- Anthony Lilley Creative District Improvement Company
- Geoff Miles Chair, Kent and Medway Economic Partnership
- Pauline Smith CXK
- Paul Winter Chair, Kent and Medway Skills Commission

Annex B: Summary of national employment support measures

Subsidy schemes to retain existing employment

Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched in March to enable employers to retain staff in conditions of forced closure or weak demand by enabling them to furlough employees. The scheme was due to be replaced on 1 November, but has been extended to 31 March 2021 in response to the reimposition of national Covid-19 restrictions. The scheme will be reviewed in January. Employees can receive 80% of their usual salary for hours not worked, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month (with the £2,500 cap proportional to hours not worked).
Self Employed Income Support Scheme (SEISS) Grant Extension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extension of the existing SEISS scheme for self-employed Grant for November to January covering 20% of average monthly trading profits capped at £1,875 in total. Second grant available for January to April, the value of which is to be determined at a later date.

Measures to directly subsidise new employment

Kickstart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 month work placements for those aged 16-24, on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment Government pays 100% of National Minimum Wage for 25 hours per week (plus NI and employer auto-enrolment). Employer can top up with additional wage or hours Employers with 30+ placements apply direct to Government Employers with 29 or fewer placements apply via a 'gateway' organisation, which will receive £300 per placement to cover admin costs. There are currently 11 gateway organisations based in Kent and Medway (including CXK, Kent Invicta Chamber, The Education People and West Kent Partnership).
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Measures linking employment and training

Apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £2,000 payment to employers for each apprentice hired aged under 25 (£1,500 for 25+) between 1 August and 31 January. This is in addition to an existing £1,000 payment to employers for apprentices aged 16-18
Sector-based work academies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 6 weeks; pre-employment training, work experience placement and a guaranteed interview. Supported by JCP
Traineeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £1000 incentive for businesses to support a skills development programme including a work placement lasting from 6 weeks to 1 year.

Careers advice and employment support

National Careers Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career information, advice and guidance, offered in Kent and Medway via CXK. Plan for Jobs in summer 2020 allocated additional funding to support increased client numbers
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Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service for people who have been unemployed for at least 13 weeks and would benefit from a short package of tailored support.
Expanded Youth Offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting 18 to 24 year olds, includes a 13 week programme and once completed, participants will be encouraged to take up work related training or an apprenticeship.
Work and Health Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for people to get and keep a job. Extended in the Plan for Jobs to offer additional voluntary support for those on benefits that have been unemployed for more than 3 months
Flexible Support Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobcentre Plus support for people to purchase essential items that will help them get a job
Supported Internships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study programme based at a business for 16-24 year olds with a statement of Special Educational Need or an Education, Health and Care Plan to benefit from learning in the workplace. • Unpaid placements last a minimum of 6 months. Interns will also study English and Maths and other relevant qualifications
Supported Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports people with disabilities to secure and retain sustainable paid employment. Delivered via a range of partners (including The Education People),