

Kent and Medway Employment Plan

Summary

Why we need an Employment Plan

The Covid-19 pandemic has already had a severe impact on jobs, with some sectors, such as retail and hospitality especially badly affected. Although we expect a return to growth next year as the vaccine becomes available, the employment market is likely to be challenging for some time.

The Government has responded with a range of measures to open up new job opportunities and to support jobseekers. To back these efforts, an Employment Task Force has been established for Kent and Medway, bringing together business, local government, schools, colleges, universities, careers service providers, the Department for Work and Pensions and two of the county's MPs.

We're committed to working together to minimise the impact of the crisis in the short term, and opening up opportunities for new jobs and skills in the longer term. In December 2020, we published the Kent and Medway Employment Plan, setting out four key areas for action.

Priorities for action

Supporting young people into work

We will:

- **Make the Kickstart scheme work**, maximising the benefits for jobseekers and employers in Kent and Medway. We will ensure that organisations responsible for delivering Kickstart work together and give employers the information they need, and we will make sure that local public sector organisations lead by example in creating new job placements for young people.
- **Establish a network of Youth Hubs**, providing employability and skills advice to young people.
- **Explore new opportunities for work-based learning**, 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.
- **Increase access to further and higher education**, including through the increased provision of short courses, helping people gain university and college education.
- **Promote and coordinate access to information, advice and guidance** in schools.

Supporting the existing workforce

We will:

- **Coordinate the use of the Adult Education Budget** across Kent and Medway to help people gain the skills they need for progression in work, especially in support of digital skills.

- **Promote and coordinate access to advice, guidance and support** to ensure that services are available to the wider number of people facing career change decisions

Responding to redundancy

We will:

- **Promote the Jobcentre Plus Rapid Response Service** employers and their employees facing redundancy situations - ensuring 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
- **Extend the role of the Growth Hub:** Through the Kent and Medway Growth Hub's Business Support Helpline to promote take-up of measures to incentivise employment and we will provide advice to firms seeking redundancy support.

Driving future demand

We will:

- **Promote business growth and investment through** access to business advice and guidance, financial support for innovation, attracting and retaining investment
- **Promote best practice in securing local employment** when new job-creating schemes come forward – encouraging expanding employers to advertise vacancies through Jobcentre Plus, create Apprenticeships, take advantage of schemes such as Kickstart, and so on; and supporting industry-led solutions to secure a supply of skilled employees.
- **Ensure that employers have access to information** about the skills and employment support opportunities that are available to them.

Looking to the future

Our main focus is on responding to the immediate employment crisis. But looking to the longer term, we aim to create a lasting 'employment coalition' grounded in practical action and a better mutual understanding of what each partner can do, and a strong understanding of the employment opportunities that a rapidly changing economy can bring.

Find out more

To find out more about the Kent and Medway Employment Plan, please visit www.kent.gov.uk/employment, or email us at employment@kent.gov.uk

Kent and Medway Employment Task Force Members

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

December 2020