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Report to COUNCIL 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024

## Education and Skills Portfolio Update

### Portfolio Holder:

Councillor Mohon Ali, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

This report provides an update on the main activity since the last Council meeting relating to portfolio responsibilities. Council is requested to note the report.

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### SEND and Inclusion

I am delighted to report that Dame Christine Lenehan chaired her first Local Inclusion Partnership Executive Board on 5 February 2024. She will lead the Board to monitor the progress of the Priority Action Plan as well as the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Inclusion Local Improvement Strategy.

I am also pleased to report that progress in the Department for Education's Change Programme Partnership and their Delivering Better Value projects continues at pace, with advertisements and recruitment to posts funded within these projects already progressing. Impact will be felt in schools and with families by the summer term.

### Quality of Education

The Oldham Learning partnership met during February and confirmed their priorities for 2024 as attendance, school improvement through partnerships, and SEND.

During February I was delighted to be informed that Ofsted reported on Good outcomes from school inspections at both St Mary's RC primary and Roundthorn Academy. I pass on my best wishes to staff at the schools, and thank them for the ceaseless work they do to support their children and communities.

### Virtual School for Children Looked After

The Virtual School for Children Looked After in Oldham continues to provide essential advice, guidance, and support to partners regarding the educational needs of children in care. The Virtual School staff have held collaborative meetings with secondary schools; Virtual School officers have used child level data and case knowledge to provide challenge and support to the children's Designated Teachers, reviewing practice and provision, identifying barriers, and success and celebrations. These meetings will continue with remaining secondary schools during the Spring term with plans to also develop this model with our in-borough special schools.

The Raising Aspirations and Participation Programme continues to offer diverse opportunities for children, such as a cookery programme for primary school children and first aid awareness training for students in years 10 / 11.

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On Wednesday 24th January, Virtual School staff also led a children social care network event with a focus on school attendance. Sessions were led by the inclusion team, and the educational psychology service. I am pleased to say that the session was well attended, and ended with further plans in place to support children's social care colleagues in the use of the emotionally based school avoidance toolkit. This session will be delivered again during the year to ensure all children's social care staff access this important information.

### **Post-16/Skills/Apprenticeships and Adult Education**

The Employment and Skills Strategy and associated action plan was welcomed and approved by the Oldham Economy Board. Work with the Council communications team has commenced on the launch plan and production of the strategy has started with a view to a formal launch in Spring.

The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) community grants scheme received a total of 17 bids from organisations to support Oldham residents with their learning. WEA have now informed the successful organisations (Mahdlo, Greenhill, Relax Kids, OPAG, Outdoor Collective and Upturn). Further bidding is now open with the aim of supporting Oldham's residents into inclusive employment.

National Apprenticeship Week took place during the week commencing Monday 5th February. A range of events took place across Oldham to publicise apprenticeship opportunities and celebrate the success of the council's apprenticeship programme using case studies.

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) carried out their annual audit and compliance visit of the Lifelong Learning Service (LLS). The service is awaiting the full report but has been informed that it has passed, maintaining a 100% compliance record. GMCA have now begun a period of consultation to begin to understand the role of community learning. Oldham is working closely with the other Councils to ensure that fair representation is made. GMCA will be meeting LLS management team during mid-February to support the consultation process.

**Recommendations:** Council is requested to note the report.