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Education & Skills Funding Agency

# E-Bulletin

HLC Humber Learning Consortium
*Passionate about learning*

March 2021 Vol.24

## TESTING, TESTING 1,2,3!!!...

From 8th March, post 16 provision has been able to return to face to face delivery, in spite of the fact that the staff and learner testing arrangements for the Independent Learning Sector will not be in place till April. Given that testing is seen as key to the effective and safe return of learners to schools and colleges, this is clearly not the best piece of Government planning you'll ever see! AELP, as reported in FE News, have described the lack of testing arrangements for independent providers as "disgraceful."

**So what should you do about testing in the meantime?** When pushed about the lack of testing resources for the Independent Sector, the Education Secretary suggested that "all independent training providers are able to benefit through the Community Testing regime". **So the advice is to apply for staff and learner tests through the local community testing facilities**, we are fortunate in the Humber that **all four Local Authority areas have these**, and we have provided the links below. It is worth noting that you may have to be persistent about your eligibility to access these facilities, as there appears to be some conjecture about who can/can't use them (NB Hull City Council have formally agreed that all Hull based post 16 independent providers have access to these facilities).

**As well as tapping into these tests sites before April, you will also need to review your risk assessment,** to ensure that you minimise transmission by implementing the DfE recommended system of controls as previously reported. Clearly **if you are unable to access testing facilities**, to ensure the safety of staff and learners, **you will have to consider either, a) more stringent systems of control, and / or b) consider phasing of face to face return from April when testing will be more readily available.** Please discuss your arrangements with your contract teams.

In relation to systems of control there has been guidance issued regarding face coverings in education link and ventilation link

**Links to Local Authority testing sites are as follows;**

- **Hull City Council** link
- **North East Lincolnshire Council** link
- **East Riding of Yorkshire Council Testing** link
- **North Lincolnshire Council** – No link to apply yet. The community testing web page states, "The Council is contacting people and organisations directly with invites to take part in the Community Testing Programme." Link to general North Lincolnshire Council | Coronavirus (Covid-19) page link.

Paul Rands, Deputy CEO.

https://www.hlc-vol.org/

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## SKILLS HUMBER 2021 - THE HUGELY POPULAR CAREERS EVENT GOES VIRTUAL!...

This year's **Skillshumber 2021** careers, skills and apprenticeship event will be held virtually.

This popular, annual event much valued by schools and young people across the Humber area, will be taking place on **21 April 2021.** For more information or to get involved please follow the link.

## WHAT WILL YOUR NEW WAY OF DELIVERY LOOK LIKE POST COVID-19?

We would really like to start sharing some examples from across our delivery network of your new ways of working with participants post COVID-19. If you would like your organisation to feature in the newsletter, please email Katie.freeman@hlc-vol.org.

## £1000 TRAINEESHIP WORK PLACEMENT GRANTS AVAILABLE TO EMPLOYERS...

Traineeships are programmes of education and training that help young people get the skills and experience they need to get an Apprenticeship or a job.

Employers that provide the work placement element can now claim an incentive payment using this link.

The form when submitted will be checked against the monthly data submitted by HLC before payments are made.

The £1,000 payment is limited to 10 trainees for each of the nine regions in England, per employer. The Department for Education confirmed the £1,000 can only be claimed for work placements that were "started and completed" from 1 September 2020 to 31 July 2021.

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## SKILLS, HOPE AND FRIENDSHIP AND A GOOD WORKOUT.

Working for Health provides one to one and group support for people, mainly with mental health conditions, to help them to start their recovery journey, build confidence, explore opportunities and find work.

Like every other community business, they have had to adapt their delivery to keep people engaged and connected through the pandemic.

In August 2020, they took over their allotment. It was in an awful state, but they could see its potential of providing a safe and welcoming Covid safe environment. They maintained a rule of six and practiced social distancing but it meant that their participants were able to meet others and get involved in something purposeful.

In addition to the physical gardening and landscaping activities they held tea and chat sessions and people were able to talk about how they were and to gain the support they needed. The take up for the allotment group was overwhelming, they even had to put on additional sessions to meet the demand.

Even in full lockdown, they have continued to meet virtually to continue the work. Seed and bulb packs have been sent to each participant so that they can continue to grow at home, in readiness for the spring planting.

And people love it. The group have spoken about the positive impact on their mental health, the benefits of connecting with others and the friendships that are being developed, and the purpose and routine this project has provided in a very unsettling time.

They are really excited that they will soon be able to get back to the allotment as Covid restrictions ease again and make this space a part of the HLC Community Grants 5 funded project starting soon.

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## COVID CHAMPIONS

Last year a group of young learners from the This-Ability project who were trying to adapt to a different way of learning decided that there were many issues and questions they needed to answer and discuss with both their mentors and their peers, such as learning by 'Zoom', Covid, Tiers, lockdown rules etc.

Many learner's backgrounds differed too which included issues with supported housing, living with vulnerable family members, shielding or being exempt from wearing masks.

They decided to trial a meeting away from the This-Ability sessions once a fortnight to focus on these concerns and also on the general well-being of learners, they called this group the 'Covid Champions'.

To give the meetings some structure each member researched an update in the following topics: Covid-19 updates, Public Transport, Retail, Hospitality and what they can do to support themselves in this 'new normal' with added ideas for keeping active. They then came back together to share their findings with the rest of the group. The 'Covid Champion' group will continue as long as the young people feel it is needed.

Here are some quotes from the members:

**"It's good to talk to your peers about the same worries, I don't feel alone anymore."**

**"I think I'd go mad if it wasn't for this group, it's hard living through Covid when you are isolated from your friends and family."**

## GRAB A BREW, JOIN THIS-ABILITY FOR A #BIZHOUR CHAT ON TWITTER

This-Ability's employer support team MOBY will be chatting to businesses during Twitter's **#BizHour every Tuesday** between **2 - 3 pm**.

We are keen to find out how the pandemic has affected employers personally, if they feel the labour market has changed and how this may affect business and recruitment going forward. Most importantly, we want to find solutions, we want to contribute to the network of support available to businesses who have suffered due to the Coronavirus pandemic. **Feel free to join in the conversations on @HLCtrainingnews Twitter using the #BizHour hashtag**

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