

# Employment and Skills Plan Policy Statement Template

## Appendix 2 – Policy Statements

### More and Better Apprenticeships

#### Vision / Aims & Objective

To increase the awareness of business and individuals within the region of the benefits of apprenticeships, especially higher level apprenticeships, ensuring that opportunities are high quality, open and available to all.

To encourage more employers to offer good quality, well-paid apprenticeship opportunities, including in priority skills areas and at higher / degree level, especially in our key sectors<sup>1</sup>.

To have an integrated T level and apprenticeship offer across the region that addresses local needs.

That all business, particularly those in key sectors, are able to recruit and realise the full benefits of employing apprentices and that businesses are able to use their levy contributions effectively.

To demonstrate a year on year increase in apprenticeships opportunities in priority sectors identified through our Labour Market Information.

#### How does this contribute to Inclusive Growth?

Ensuring that every individual is able to reach their potential and increase skill levels is a vital part of having a region that delivers for all. Improved skills mean increased employability and increased earning power.

Apprenticeships (including higher/degree level) can help ensure this by giving those from all backgrounds the opportunity to access the right skills and opportunities for them.

Widening access to apprenticeships for disadvantaged and excluded groups will help unlock their potential and address the skills shortages in the region.

Policy and programmes will be designed and implemented in a way that ensures that geographic areas most in need of help will be considered appropriately.

#### Evidence and rationale to support vision

The current apprenticeship reforms have been linked to a decline in starts nationally and locally, but they play an important role in supporting business to get the skills they need and young people to access the right opportunities that develop into rewarding careers. The changes to the system need time to bed in and for business and providers to get used to – the apprenticeship sector needs stability, the changes need to be given a chance to succeed.

The Government ambition for 3 million starts by 2020 remains. To achieve our contribution to the Governments ambition would require an average of 35,600 new apprenticeship starts per annum. The Leeds City Region's achievement rates are above the national average but 30 percent do not complete.

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<sup>1</sup> Our key / priority sectors are: Digital; Engineering and Manufacturing; and Infrastructure

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There were 30,030 apprenticeship starts in 2016/17, a fall of 4 percent on the previous year. 25 percent of the starts (7,590) were for 16-18 year olds. 40 percent (12,000) were advanced level and 7 percent (2,010) were higher apprenticeships.

There is still a perception that apprenticeship are only for young people – they are for all age groups and can plan an important part of individuals of any age developing their own career routes.

The take-up of higher / degree apprenticeships in the region lags behind leading areas, including not just London but also Manchester and Sheffield. Higher and degree level apprenticeships can help address the skills deficit in high level skills areas – high skills jobs are more resistant to automation and contribute to narrowing the productivity gap.

Local delivery partners are struggling because of the reduced take-up of apprenticeships due to the reforms bedding in.

We need to strike a balance between ensuring that learners have a wide choice of options and that business are getting the skills they need.

There is still scope to increase employer involvement in apprenticeships.

The Government's Careers Strategy and the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 ensures that schools must allow FE providers to speak to pupils about technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

*[Link to more substantial evidence base will be included in online version]*

### **How to achieve the vision**

In order to deliver the Region's vision action is needed from the Combined Authority, the LEP and our partners.

Current Action [section will contain links to relevant internet pages and partner websites]

The Combined Authority, the LEP and Local Authorities promote apprenticeships to young people across the region through the Enterprise Coordinator programme and the #futuregoals careers campaign. One of the Enterprise Coordinators is funded through National Collaborative Outreach Programme and Go Higher West Yorkshire to deliver apprenticeships messaging in schools.

We offer grants to companies in our priority skills shortage areas to take on apprentices for the first time, with top up grants available for higher or degree level apprenticeships, which help deliver the high level skills the region needs.

We are working with Go Higher West Yorkshire to develop a broader degree level apprenticeship offer. This work has been facilitated initially through the national Degree Apprenticeship Development Fund which has provided over 200 apprentice degree level opportunities for the 2018/19 academic year.

The Delivery Agreements that we have in place with colleges will be refreshed to include aspirations around all apprenticeships delivery – not just for 16-18 year olds.

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### Future Action

We will promote apprenticeships through the Employment Hub programme. This programme will play a key role in ensuring business have the right skills needed to grow, and individuals are able to enhance their skills and access the right opportunities through an impartial brokerage service. It will ensure that skills gaps are addressed by aligning opportunities with the region's needs, striking the right balance between offering students a wide choice of options and ensuring that business are able to access the right skills.

To make a bigger difference to individuals, helping them gain the skills they need for rewarding careers, and ensuring that business has the right skills to prosper, more freedom is needed over the apprenticeship levy – this could make a real difference to the delivery of apprenticeships in the City Region.

Any unspent or unallocated levy funding, which will currently be recouped by Government if not spent by the individual companies, should be ring fenced for use in the region to engage more businesses in apprenticeships. This allocation of funding locally would support our ambitions and activity of working with the 80 percent of business in the region who have never offered apprenticeships.

There needs to be a more open and collaborative approach between Government, the ESFA and Combined Authorities / LEP to ensure a real difference is made in this area. Timely discussions on changes and details of any marketing activity need to be shared at an early stage so that we can effectively complement the work. An example of this would be to give us access to the list of levy paying companies in the region, this would enable the Combined Authority to help businesses with the effective use of their levy contributions, ensuring that they get the apprentices they need.

The citizens of the Combined Authority and LEP geography, and in particular young people and their key influencers (parents, teachers and careers practitioners) need to be able to see the benefits that an apprenticeship can deliver, in terms of prospects and a rewarding career. This can only be communicated through effective careers information, advice and guidance – apprenticeships need to be seen as an opportunity for all rather than a poor relation to the academic route. They also need to be seen by business and individuals at all ages as being an attractive proposition.

We need to reflect on the current programme of action, to build on the work with HEIs on the development of a local degree apprenticeship offer that reflects the skills needs of the Leeds City Region.

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## Raising the Bar on High Level Skills

### Vision / Aims & Objective

To increase the proportion of the working age population with higher level qualifications and close the gap to the national average.

To raise the aspiration and awareness of high level skills opportunities, including higher and degree level apprenticeships, across all communities.

That local employers, especially those in our key sectors<sup>2</sup>, are able to access employees with the high level skills that they need to drive innovation and productivity, and are able to help them develop.

To ensure that the right pathways are available for young people to progress into higher level learning.

### How does this contribute to Inclusive Growth?

Ensuring that every individual is able to reach their potential and increase skill levels is a vital part of having a region that delivers for all. Improved skills mean increased employability and increased earning power.

To do this we need to give those from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to access high level skills and remove barriers to them doing so, improving social mobility.

Unlocking the potential of those from disadvantaged backgrounds will help to address the skills shortages in the region.

Policy and programmes will be designed and implemented in a way that ensures that geographic areas most in need of help will be considered appropriately.

### Evidence and rationale to support vision

We have a current deficit in high level skills and there is strong projected employment growth in high skilled occupations – high skills jobs are more resistant to automation and contribute to narrowing the productivity gap.

There are continuing skills shortages in higher level STEM areas, including engineering and digital, which we need to address by increasing the pipeline of relevant skills, including getting more women into STEM.

In some districts in our region there are low Higher Education participation rates, especially for disadvantaged groups and Black and Minority Ethnic groups, contributing to the pockets of stubborn deprivation and the stall in living standards.

There is a limited pipeline of higher and degree level apprenticeship opportunities and a relatively low completion rate for higher apprenticeships.

We have the largest higher education sector outside London, with a diverse body of institutions. Our HEIs generally perform above the national average with regard to overall student satisfaction (captured through the National Student Survey) while the University of

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<sup>2</sup> Our key / priority sectors are: Digital; Engineering and Manufacturing; and Infrastructure

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Leeds is ranked 13<sup>th</sup> (out of 131 institutions) by the Complete University Guide and the University of York is ranked 21<sup>st</sup>, based on entry standards, student satisfaction, research quality and graduate prospects.

*[Link to more substantial evidence base will be included in online version]*

### How to achieve the vision

In order to deliver the Region's vision action is needed from the Combined Authority and our partners.

Current Action *[section will contain links to relevant internet pages and partner websites]*

We have developed and agreed Delivery Agreements with colleges which include aspirations around development of higher level skills which benefit the local economy.

Our Enterprise Coordinator programme works with businesses and schools to encourage employer encounters and raise aspiration and awareness of higher level skills, including the Combined Authority's #Futuregoals campaign.

We are supporting the development of infrastructure to offer degree apprenticeship across 12 occupational areas, with a view to supporting social mobility

Our digital skills campaign is increasing awareness of the importance of high level digital skills and the benefits they can bring to individuals thinking about a career change.

The Combined Authority, LEP and partners are delivering a range of ESIF funded programmes which contribute to delivering higher level skills, including:

- reBoot
- Skills Service
- Reach Higher

We are investing £79m of skills capital into new or refurbished FE facilities to ensure colleges can offer a high standard of education, especially in those subjects in demand by employers.

The Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership helps to attract businesses to the region which will create skilled jobs.

### Future Action

To make a bigger difference change is needed.

The new government emphasis on technical education presents an opportunity for high level skills. We need to see choices available to all, and ensure that all have access to the right information to make informed choices.

We need to be able to work with partners to ensure provision is available that benefits the region. We are already doing this through the Delivery Agreements but with the right levers (e.g. being able to incentivise delivery of provision that directly addresses the region's needs) more could be done, including extending delivery agreements to include Higher Education Institutions.

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Business already works with providers to develop specific provision outside of the mainstream qualifications but more could be done here. The region needs to enable SMEs to access tailored higher education provision by facilitating aggregation of demand – can this be facilitated by technology. It needs to be easier for business to shape higher education curriculum, especially in fast moving technical subjects.

Effective management and leadership is key to productivity, higher level apprenticeships are a vital aspect of this. As part of wider efforts to help companies make the most of the levy the Combined Authority, LEP and partners will look at how it can be used more effectively to develop management skills and improve productivity across the region.

The region needs to ensure key priorities such as Med-Tech have the high level skills they need, e.g. by clear educational/skills routes available in the region (apprenticeships, T levels). High level skills are directly related to innovation, having greater influence over local provision will help with ensuring both high level skills are available resulting in high levels of innovation in the region.

As part of work on careers advice and through the Enterprise Coordinator programme greater links between qualifications and priority sectors/jobs in the region needs to be made. Links to the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) need to be strengthened. People need to understand how they can access advice and provision and get to higher levels, this can only be achieved with a fully integrated careers advice service which includes adults.