
Report to: LEP Board

Date: 24 February 2021

Subject: **Employment and Skills Plan Refresh**

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To update the Board on the work to refresh the Employment and Skills Plan.
- 1.2 To seek the Board's endorsement to publish the refreshed Employment and Skills priorities and indicative actions as an Employment and Skills Framework. This paper summarises the key components, and a full slide pack laying out the strategic context, evidence base and objectives is included at Appendix 1,
- 1.3 A presentation will be shared at the meeting to cover the key elements and design proposals for the Framework.

2. Information

- 2.1 In March 2020, the Employment and Skills Panel agreed a workplan to refresh the existing Employment and Skills Plan; Skilled People, Better Jobs (2016-2020).
- 2.2 Since then there has been significant progress against many of the Plan's high-level priorities and several significant changes in the landscape. This includes the recent publication of the cross-departmental, DfE led White Paper on FE Reform (Jan 2021), as well as the yet to be published White Paper on devolution. As the detail of these reforms emerge, they will require a detailed response, including actions for the Combined Authority and its partners.
- 2.3 It is therefore proposed that in order to remain flexible whilst ensuring that the City Region's employment and skills priorities remain strategic and clear, the work that has been done to refresh the current Employment and Skills Plan is published as an Employment and Skills Framework. The Framework will include high level priorities, indicative actions and a sectoral focus whilst allowing more detailed plans to be formed as part of the LEP's ongoing employment and skills agenda and other more detailed plans e.g., digital skills addressed through the Local Digital Skills Partnership plan.

Review of the existing plan

2.4 To date the review of the existing plan has included:

- A review undertaken with key partners and a comprehensive analysis of progress against the existing priorities
- An extensive consultation and engagement phase on the strengths, challenges and refreshed priorities with over 200 key stakeholders and partners including employers, business intermediaries, Local Authorities, universities, colleges, students, headteachers and VCS organisations.
- An online Your Voice survey ran for four weeks in August and September, receiving 113 responses.
- A joint workshop with BIG and ESP members on the indicative actions for the revised priorities.

Progress to date

2.5 There has been significant progress against several strategic priorities:

- The Devolution deal secured progress in key areas:
 - **Adult Education Budget (AEB) Devolution Implementation** and the **AEB Strategy** is a key Employment and Skills Plan within the Strategic Economic Framework.
 - A **Local Digital Skills Partnership** has been established to address digital exclusion, support the digital growth of SMEs and charities, and help educators and students to grow digital skills
- The **Future-Ready Skills Commission** has published its blueprint and final report for the post-16 skills system
- The Combined Authority and West Yorkshire Colleges have **Delivery Agreements** in place that set out delivery and curriculum planning against the region's skills priorities. This will be extended as a minimum to all AEB grant recipients.
- Lifetime Skills Guarantee, **Level 3 entitlement** will be delegated to the Combined Authority and aligned with AEB.

2.6 The following summarises the key Combined Authority and LEP delivery programmes and projects:

Careers and retraining

- **[re]boot** offers over 18-year-olds the chance to upskill, gain new skills/qualifications and enter employment within shortage sectors
- **#futuregoals** is an all-age careers platform and campaign that showcases jobs and careers in a range of sectors, created with employers.

Education offer

- **Enterprise Adviser Network (EAN)** works with 185 secondary schools and colleges to improve the destinations of young people.
- **Careers Hubs** enhance and target activity in Bradford and Kirklees as well as institutions across West Yorkshire with high SEND pupils.
- The pilot **Raising Aspiration Fund** has created employer co-designed provision targeted at students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **Skills for Growth** programme enables SMEs to access education providers in a simple one stop approach with localised delivery.

Employment Offer

- **Employment Hubs** deliver in partnership with Local Authorities to support young people aged 15-24 to access additional learning, apprenticeships and/or employment. They also engage businesses to support their workforce development including talent matching to job and apprenticeship vacancies. This programme has been extended in response to the COVID-19 crisis.
- The **Apprenticeship Levy Support service** helps businesses to either use their levy funds to recruit their own apprentices or transfer their unspent levy to other businesses seeking apprenticeship funding.

2.7 A review of progress against priorities was undertaken with partners and the following areas were identified as needing a focus in the refreshed priorities:

- Technical Education including Apprenticeships
- Digital Skills
- Basic Skills
- Diversity on the workplace and 'Good Work'
- Starting careers earlier (primary school) and making it lifelong
- Enterprise and entrepreneurship

2.8 The following principles informed the refresh:

- Be strategic and practical in content and design
- Embed the Skills Commission proposals
- Be flexible, allowing for changes and subsequent plans to align
- Be practical and allow stakeholders and partners to plan their own priorities and delivery
- Embed the priorities of the Strategic Economic Framework (SEF) and other key policies, including Inclusive Growth and Climate Emergency priorities
- Be bold and ambitious outlining the actions required to meet the vision and support the case for further devolution
- Reflect the geographies of the Combined Authority and ensure that collaborative partnership work continues across the functional economic area of the region.

Vision

- 2.9 West Yorkshire is the largest labour market in the Northern Powerhouse, with strengths in manufacturing, financial and professional services, and the rapidly developing fields of digital and healthcare technology. Our diversity, rich cultural heritage and geography makes West Yorkshire one of the country’s best places to live, study and work.
- 2.10 Our vision is for West Yorkshire to be a world-leading region where investment in skills, training and education, and support from employers go hand in hand to create a diverse, inclusive, and highly skilled workforce with good jobs, leading to sustained improvements in the quality of life for all.
- 2.11 We want West Yorkshire to be a place where:
 - There are no barriers to people taking up, progressing and succeeding in learning and work, and where they are supported into good employment.
 - Employers recognise the value of a diverse workforce and invest in their talent to develop the skills that will improve productivity and support progression in the workplace.
 - Individuals value lifelong learning and are able to make decisions about their development, informed by quality, relevant careers information based on the reality on the ground.
 - World class teaching and training provides flexible learning opportunities that align to the strategic needs of the local economy.

The refreshed priorities

- 2.12 Following the review, consultation and engagement phases, the Panel agreed that the five main priorities remained broadly correct, subject to being refreshed to capture changes in the landscape and to ensure they are future proof. The priorities have been refreshed as follows:

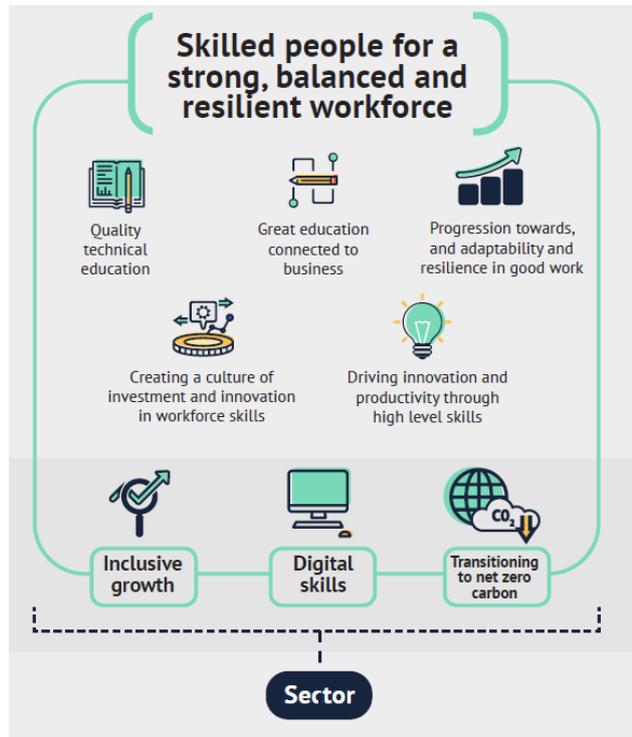
CURRENT	REVISED
More and better apprenticeships	Quality technical education
Great education connected to business	Great education connected to business
Employability, accessing jobs and realising potential	Progression towards, and adaptability and resilience in good work
Building workforce skills and attracting talent	Creating a culture of investment in workforce skills
Raising the bar on high level skills	Driving innovation and productivity through high level skills

Overview of the Employment and Skills Plan Framework

- 2.13 The Framework has five priorities (above) and three cross cutting themes; inclusive growth, digital skills and working towards net zero.
- 2.14 The plan also aims to address the main skills and employment barriers in each of the main industrial sectors, rather than identifying key sectors as in the previous plan. This will allow a broader engagement with employers as well as

the City Region being better able to respond to the changing needs of sectors, particularly in the economic climate created by COVID-19 and EU Exit.

Figure: Overview of the draft Framework



Next Steps

- 2.15 It is proposed that the revised Employment and Skills priorities are published as a Framework that sets out the Region’s strategic aims whilst allowing flexibility to produce further detail within specific plans.
- 2.16 The Combined Authority will consider the framework for endorsement at their meeting on 9 March.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 The Framework is designed to ensure that all skills programme development considers contributions to tackling the climate emergency and our ambitious target to reach net zero carbon by 2038. This is a cross cutting theme in the Framework.
- 3.2 The framework sets out an ambition to work with partners through a Green Skills Partnership to develop a plan to address and provide for the specific skills needs required to meet future workforce demand and ensure a just transition for jobs at risk from decarbonisation.
- 3.3 To support the future workforce and employment opportunities presented by the scale of projects such as retrofitting buildings, the Framework sets out the need to provide quality careers information and inspiration that focuses that highlight the importance of STEM subjects

3.4 The priority around Quality Technical Education is clear that qualifications and training provision should be aligned to future skills needs, including in areas where job growth is forecasted.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

4.1 The plan contains several priorities and indicative actions that are expected to demonstrate progress in the following areas:

- % qualified below level 2
- Unemployment rate
- % of employees in quality work
- Apprenticeship starts
- Jobs paying below Real Living Wage
- Employment rate gap for disadvantaged groups
- NEETs

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 The Employment & Skills Panel, acting as the City Region's Skills Advisory Panel, is required to publish Employment and Skills priorities.

7. Staffing Implications

7.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

8. External Consultees

8.1 Over 300 stakeholders were consulted as part of the plan's development, including a Your Voice survey. The consultation and the results of the survey are published at www.yourvoice.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/esp

9. Recommendations

9.1 The Board is asked to consider endorsement of the publication of an Employment and Skills Framework

10. Background Documents

10.1 None.

11. Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1 – Employment and Skills Framework