

**Report to:** West Yorkshire Combined Authority

**Date:** 9 March 2021

**Subject:** **Employment and Skills Plan Refresh**

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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	

## 1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To update the Combined Authority on the work to date of the Employment and Skills Plan refresh.
- 1.2 To seek the Combined Authority's endorsement to publish the refreshed Employment and Skills priorities and indicative actions as an Employment and Skills Framework, as part of the Strategic Economic 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). The refreshed Employment and Skills Plan will be a key strategy within the Strategic Economic Framework (SEF).
- 2.2 Since publication of the existing plan, there has been significant progress against many of its priorities. There have also been notable changes in the landscape over the last five years, including the recent publication of the cross-departmental, DfE-led White Paper (Skills for Jobs) and the awaited White Paper on devolution. As more details of these reforms emerge, they will

require a detailed response including actions for the Combined Authority and its partners in relation to employment and skills.

- 2.3 In order to maintain flexibility whilst ensuring that the region's employment and skills priorities remain strategic and clear, it is proposed that the refreshed 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 and Combined Authority'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 for employment and skills 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 (11 August -6 September) and received 113 responses
  - A joint workshop with BIG Panel and ESP members on the indicative actions for the revised priorities.
  - Endorsement of the plan by Employment and Skills Panel and LEP Board

#### Progress to date

- 2.5 There are a number of areas that the Combined Authority and its partners have made significant progress including against the following strategic priorities:
- The Devolution deal has secured a number of strategic priorities including:
    - **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 preventing Digital Exclusion, support SME and Charity Digital Growth and educators and students to grow digital skills
  - **Future-Ready Skills Commission** has published its blueprint and final report for a post-16 skills system
  - West Yorkshire 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 areas include current CA/LEP delivery programmes and projects:

**Careers and retraining**

- **The [re]boot programme** offers individuals over the age of 18 the chance to upskill, gain new skills/qualifications and enter employment within the shortage sectors
- **#futuregoals** is an all-age careers platform and campaign that showcases jobs and careers in a range of sectors and 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** provide enhanced and targeted activity in Bradford and Kirklees as well with institutions with high numbers of SEND pupils
- **Raising Aspiration fund** this pilot fund has created employer co-designed provision targeted at students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- **Skills for Growth** programme enables small and medium enterprises to access education providers in a simple one stop approach with localised delivery.

**Employment Offer**

- The **LCR Employment Hub** programme is delivered in partnership with Local Authorities to support young people aged 15-24 to access additional learning, apprenticeships and/or employment and engage businesses to support their workforce development including talent matching to job and apprenticeship vacancies. This programme has been extended in response to Economic Recovery
- The **Apprenticeship Levy Support service** helps levy paying businesses to either use their levy funds to recruit their own apprentice or transfer their unspent levy to other businesses seeking apprenticeship funding.

2.7 The review of progress against priorities was undertaken with our partners and considered the actions undertaken across the region to secure progress. Following analysis, the following areas were identified as needing a focus on any refreshed priorities:

- Technical education including Apprenticeships
- Digital skills
- Basic skills
- Diversity in the workplace and 'Good Work'
- Lifelong careers education that begins earlier (primary school)
- Enterprise and entrepreneurship

2.8 The following principles were agreed to inform 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, for example 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.

### The vision of the new Framework

- 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 and consultation and engagement phases of the workplan, the Employment and Skills Panel agreed that the five main priorities remained broadly correct, subject to being refreshed to capture changes in the landscape and to ensure that they are future-proof. The existing 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 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 Framework 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 enabling the City Region to better respond to the changing needs of sectors, particularly in the immediate economic climate created by COVID-19 and EU Exit.

**Figure 1: draft overview of the Employment and Skills Framework**



### Next steps

- 2.15 It is proposed that the revised priorities for employment and skills in West Yorkshire are published as an Employment and Skills Framework that sets out the Region's strategic aims whilst allowing flexibility to produce further detail within specific plans.

## **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 be a net zero carbon economy 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 of 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 has a number of 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 and partners were consulted as part of the plan's development, including an online public survey. The survey results and a summary of feedback from focus groups and workshops are published at [www.yourvoice.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/esp](http://www.yourvoice.westyorks-ca.gov.uk/esp)

## **9. Recommendations**

- 9.1 The Combined Authority is asked to endorse the publication of the Employment and Skills Framework as part of the Strategic Economic Framework.

## **10. Background Documents**

There are no background documents referenced in this report.

## **11. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Employment and Skills Framework