
Report to: Employment & Skills Committee

Date: 29 October 2021

Subject: **West Yorkshire Digital Skills Partnership**

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1. To provide the Employment & Skills Committee with an update on the West Yorkshire Digital Skills Partnership, including the Digital Skills Plan and the next steps towards its publication and its launch
- 1.2. To seek the Committee's endorsement on the proposed vision statement and high-level priorities in the plan.

2. Information

Local Digital Skills Plan

- 2.1. The Local Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP) was created as part of the West Yorkshire Devolution deal. The LDSP brings together skills provision, acts as a test-bed for offers, and is a conduit to bring together stakeholders and partners to add value to the region's digital skills growth.
- 2.2. The LDSP's aspirations support the Mayoral pledges to:
 - Prioritise skills and training to ensure everyone in West Yorkshire has the skills they need to secure work
 - Support local businesses and be a champion for our regional economy
- 2.3. The Digital Skills Plan will support the development of these Mayoral pledges and deliver the agreed priorities in the Combined Authority's Economic Recovery Plan.
- 2.4. The Digital Skills Plan also supports the delivery of Employment and Skills Framework and its cross-cutting themes as well as the Digital Framework, particularly the 'digital skills for all' priority.

- 2.5. In February the Employment & Skills Panel members held a workshop to develop to shape and develop the priorities which will be a key focus within the plan.
- 2.6. Since that meeting the Digital Skills Plan has been developed through consultation with the LDSP board, with the support of key workstream groups which have included a diverse and broad membership.
- 2.7. Further consultation with senior employment and skills officers in local authorities has also supported defining the key priorities and actions.
- 2.8. This activity has supported the LDSP in shaping the plan, which is defined by the following vision statement and high-level priorities.
- 2.9. The vision statement for the Digital Skills Plan is:

“Creating a fully inclusive society and a thriving economy through the growth of digital skills for all.”

This means making West Yorkshire a region where:

- **There are no barriers** to people taking up, progressing and succeeding in learning and work, a place where they are supported into “good” jobs through the provision digital skills learning
 - **Where no individual is left behind** and all are supported to engage in an increasingly digital society through accessible and inclusive provision of digital skills training
 - **SMEs realise the potential** of digital to transform our economy and build economic resilience and growth
 - **Where people are inspired** and driven to engage in STEM learning to succeed and progress to be the workforce of the future into the “jobs of the future”
 - **That works collaboratively** to create and deliver digital skills provision that is both accessible and meaningful to all.
- 2.10. The following thematic workstreams have been established to focus on high-level priority areas in the Digital Skills Plan:
- Workstream 1 SME and Charity Digital Growth
 - Workstream 2 Social Digital Inclusion
 - Workstream 3 Workforce for the Future
 - Workstream 4 Simplifying the Digital Offer
- 2.11. This paper will be supplemented by a presentation at the meeting on the key priorities and actions proposed for the plan.

- 2.12. A final version Digital Skills Plan will be shared with the Committee ahead of its publication early next year.

Local Digital Skills Partnership Update

- 2.13 The Combined Authority has agreed to partner with IBM Skills Build. The platform support individuals to access a range of careers support tools, learning pathways and access to training. The platform uses machine learning to build a personalised pathway for individuals to achieve their career goals
- 2.14 The platform will be connected with the existing adult careers site www.futuregoals.co.uk to ensure a single point of contact for individuals and embed referral routes and signposting to existing project and programmes.
- 2.15 In partnering with IBM, this unlocks additional content for West Yorkshire residents and also give access to reporting on take-up from residents in West Yorkshire.
- 2.16 As report in Item 10 Mayoral Pledge Update, the Local Digital Skills Partnership Board will a key group to consult and engage in supporting the development of mayoral pledges including **Digital Skills Academy** and **Digital Skills Festival**

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1. The Digital Skills Plan will support growth of digital skills and therefore movement into “better jobs” and more productive jobs within the region. This will include growth of skills across the region to enhance innovation across green sector to support climate challenges.
- 3.2. The Digital Skills Plan will also support ‘digital first’ business growth through greater social digital inclusion provision. This will support climate challenges by enabling customers to make first contact online, reducing the need to travel.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1. Supporting digital skills development will positively contribute to recovery from the impact of the pandemic.
- 4.2. Delivery of the regional Digital Skills Plan will support inclusive growth across West Yorkshire. We expect to demonstrate progress in the following areas set out in the *Strategic Economic Framework*:
- % 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
 - Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 In 2020, 23% of the adult population within Yorkshire & Humber lacked essential digital skills for life, with 17% of the population lacking Foundation digital skills. 11% were unable to turn on a digital device.¹
- 5.2 The pandemic has accelerated the rate at which our lives have moved online, increasing our reliance on access to digital services. The close association between digital exclusion and other dimensions of inequality exposes the urgent need for greater digital inclusion.
- 5.3 The Digital Skills Plan seeks to directly address socio-economic inequalities facing our population. Digital Inclusion is a central tenant of the plan, to be achieved through the growth/provision of digital skills and supporting the resolution of data poverty and the ongoing challenge of accessibility and connectivity.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Staffing Implications

- 8.1. There are no staffing implications.

9. External Consultees

- 9.1. None as a direct result of this report.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1. The Committee is to comment on the work to date on a Digital Skills Plan for West Yorkshire.
- 10.2. The Committee is asked to endorse on the vision statement, high-level priorities of the West Yorkshire Digital Skills Plan.

11. Background Documents

- 11.1. None.

¹ These statistics are from the 2020 Consumer Digital Index by Lloyds which provides these breakdowns at regional levels. Updated figures for 2021 are due to be published late October 2021.

12. **Appendices**

12.1. Appendix 1 Digital Skills Plan