

Report to: Business, Economy, and Innovation Committee

Date: 6 July 2022

Subject: **Digital Skills Plan**

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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 type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" 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:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1. To provide the 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. We will progress the digital skills plan for final endorsement at the Combined Authority. This will include an assessment of the scale of the challenge and impacts of the plan on the economy and our digital skills base. We will also look as part of this process to develop targets alongside any investments made regionally in improving digital skills.
- 1.3. To seek the Committee's views on the Digital Skills 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 There has been wide consultation and engagement with stakeholders - Employment and Skills Committee; LDSP Board; workstream members from community, private and public sector organisations and senior Local Authority officers to develop the plan.

2.6 At the Employment and Skills Committee meeting in October 2021, there was enthusiastic support for the plan's vision and priorities.

2.7 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.

2.8 Since the last meeting, the four thematic workstreams of the LDSP have continued to develop the four agreed priorities with an action plan:

Social Digital Inclusion - The growth/provision of digital skills and supporting the resolution of data poverty and the ongoing challenge of accessibility and connectivity.

Workforce for the Future - To grow digital skills – ensuring greater alignment between business and education to support growth in skills and promoting career ambitions.

SME and Third Sector Growth - The growth of Essential Digital Skills and increasing resilience and sustainability of organisation and supporting the growth of skills to support the digital sector.

Simplifying the Digital Offer - Understanding current provision and current and future needs, in addition to ensuring provision is easy to access for all residents.

2.9 The Committee is asked to consider the following questions:

- Which of the actions do you consider priorities?
- What, if anything, would you add to the Action Plan?
- To review and comment on the plan's 'next steps'.

2.10 Pending endorsement from the Employment and Skills Committee and the Business, Innovation and Economy Committee, the Digital Skills Plan's next steps are to refine further before taking the plan to the Combined Authority and LEP Boards for endorsement.

2.11 The Digital Skills plan will provide direction and set priorities for action in current delivery activity for digital for all West Yorkshire partners, including through the Combined Authority's activity. Adult's skills programmes such as Skills Connect digital bootcamps, as well as Adult Education Budget flexible provision and take up of the digital entitlement will deliver many of the outcomes required to achieve the ambitions in the plan.

2.12 The Digital Skills plan also sets a clear direction of action for investment through the employment and skills pipeline of interventions. Through the mapping activities of the plan there is a clear evidence base for action and designing the right interventions with our partners to ensure that everyone in West Yorkshire is digitally included.

2.13 A dashboard of digital skills activity will be developed and presented to the Committee at its next meeting to demonstrate our delivery in this area, and any future commissioned activity as a result of the recommendations in the digital skills plan.

Local Digital Skills Partnership Update

2.14 The IBM Skills Build platform has been developed and will be live on www.futuregoals.co.uk during the week commencing 13th July. The platform supports 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

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*:

- Percentage qualified below level 2
- Unemployment rate
- Percentage 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 2022, 23% of the adult population within Yorkshire and the Humber lacked essential digital skills for life, and 7% of these are digitally excluded, meaning they cannot complete a single ‘foundation’ digital skill such as turning on a device, using a mouse/keyboard, browsing the internet. 4% of people in Yorkshire and the Humber remain offline.¹ This is despite West Yorkshire’s above-average internet infrastructure.²

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 tenet of the plan, to be achieved through the growth/provision of digital skills and supporting the

¹ This data is from the Consumer Digital Index 2021, by Lloyds Bank, which provides these breakdowns at regional levels.

² This statistic is from ThinkBroadband, correct as of 5.5.22, which analyses broadband coverage (Full Fibre, Gigabit and Superfast) by local authority area.

resolution of data poverty and the ongoing challenge of accessibility and connectivity.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. To deliver the actions in the digital skills plan will require funding. It is proposed that digital skills and the interventions outlined in this plan will be added to the Employment and Skills pipeline for development and as outline in the Investment Pipeline paper.

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 directly arising from this report.

9. External Consultees

- 9.1. A range of stakeholders including Local Authority Skills Officers, universities, college, training providers, employers and third sector have been consulted on the plan's development.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1. The Committee is asked to comment on the Digital Skills Plan.

11. Background Documents

- 11.1 None.

12. Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix 1: Digital Skills Plan

- 12.2 Appendix 2: List of LDSP workstream members who attended the Action Plan Consultations/Board Meeting