
Report to:	Economic Scrutiny Committee
Date:	16 November 2022
Subject:	Employment and Skills Programmes

Director:	Phil Witcherley, Interim Director of Economic Services Liz Hunter, Director of Policy and Development
Author:	Sonya Midgley, Head of Skills Policy

1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1. Following devolution, West Yorkshire can have more say in how to spend devolved resources to meet local objectives. This includes devolved funding for specific programmes and projects with pre-determined outcomes such as Adult Education Budget, Local Digital Skills Partnership, and delegated funding for Free Courses for Jobs covered.
- 1.2. In addition, West Yorkshire secured gainshare funding which give the Combined Authority a multi-year settlement with greater flexibilities to prioritise investments that make a real difference to people. The Combined Authority has made notional allocations to each Investment Priority in the West Yorkshire Investment Strategy (WYIS) including £21m notional allocation for Investment Priority 2 'People and Skills'
- 1.3. A future plan for Employment and Skills programmes and delivery has been developed with the Employment and Skills Committee, Local Authorities and wider partners
- 1.4. This paper provides an update on the work to date, and planned next steps.

2. Information

Strategic Context

- 2.1. Whilst West Yorkshire has lower levels of skills than the national average, there are some key areas of strength including digital skills with the fastest growing digital tech sector outside London and with digital skills being above the national average
- 2.2. Low skills are often associated with disadvantage as well as other challenges including health, environmental and social determinants. There is a need to

break cycles of deprivation with new models of longer-term support that progress people gain skills, and into sustained work with progression opportunities.

- 2.2 Rising living costs, a tight labour market, persistent skills shortages mean it is more important than ever that people can reach their potential and have access to secure work with fair pay to support job and career progression
- 2.3 The [Employment and Skills Framework](#); skilled people, good jobs and strong business has the ambition that 'everyone has the skills to be able to access good work and is supported to take up training in the workplace that enables progression and development of transferable skills'. The Framework was developed with partners and sets out the key priorities for West Yorkshire. It was published and launched by the Mayor in July 2021
- 2.4 The recently published **Digital Skills Plan** sets out the actions that will be taken to support individuals gain the digital skills required for life and work and that employers have access to a skilled workforce to support innovation and productivity whilst making the best use of funding and resources devolved to the Region through existing programmes including Adult Education Budget and Skills Connect adult training courses.
- 2.5 The **Mayor's Green Jobs Taskforce** is made up of a diverse mix of employers, skills and training providers, and third sector organisations. The Taskforce supports the development of the Mayor's pledge to 'create 1,000 well paid, skilled green jobs for young people', including advising on the establishment of a Mayoral Green Jobs Gateway. The Taskforce has been undertaking research and will report its recommendations early next year in the following areas:
 - Create demand and support individuals to access well paid, skilled, green jobs
 - Support the identification of green credentials and adoption of 'green skills' in SMEs, with guidance to access provision.
 - Improve access and provision of skills for individuals starting or progressing in work, seeking work or looking to re-train.
 - Inspiration activities and young people engagement to ensure a future talent pipeline.
 - Ensure a plan for legacy skills.
 - Improve diversity of the workforce and quality of jobs across green industries.
- 2.6 The **West Yorkshire Investment Strategy** includes an Investment Priority for People and Skills, setting out key areas for investment in this area. The Combined Authority has made a notional funding allocation of £21m of devolved gainshare towards this Investment Priority. The key areas for investment are summarised below:

- Improve employment support for individuals furthest from the labour market
- Develop interventions and programmes that engage young people early and prevent them becoming NEET
- Improve access to all age careers information and inspiration that is rooted in local labour market information and reflects the diversity of our Region.
- Programmes and interventions in line with the emerging Digital Skills Plan
- Programmes and interventions that deliver the 'green skills' needed for the economy in West Yorkshire.
- Support productivity and innovation by addressing the low take up of STEM subjects
- Deliver impartial skills support for employers that makes best use of workforce skills, addresses skills shortages, encourages employer investment and workforce planning.
- Support for project development costs as required to progress the Investment Priorities proposed above.

Future Programmes currently in development and / or to commence delivery from 2023

- 2.7. Over the past year working with the Employment and Skills Committee, Local Authorities and key partners the following plan for developing future Employment and Skills programmes has been agreed and is regularly reviewed by the Employment and Skills Committee with oversight for the development of future investment.
- 2.8 To develop our approach, we have held workshops with local authorities, college principals, employers and key stakeholders. This engagement is integral to the design process and will continue as programmes are developed.

Employment West Yorkshire

- 2.9 In October, the Combined Authority approved the £12m Employment West Yorkshire (programme name TBC). This programme will be delivered by Local Authorities and will provide transformational employment support services to 7,700 individuals through a universal, personalised service to individuals to access the employment, skills and training they need towards, into and for progression in work. The programme will commence in April 2023 for two years.

Green Skills

- 2.10 The interventions being developed for green skills will be funded through the Investment Priority for Tackling the Climate Emergency, and Environmental Sustainability and are overseen by the Climate and Environment Committee.

2.11 The following evidence led interventions are currently being developed and will be taken through assurance processes before they are anticipated to be in place by Summer 2023:

- An online Green Jobs Gateway and service for employers looking to offer greener roles, and individuals looking to access these roles and/or develop green skills. The platform will highlight and celebrate green jobs in the region. The platform will allow businesses to make a green jobs pledge – bringing these elements together at a central point for business and individuals and will align to new services such as Employment West Yorkshire and enable individuals to access support to gain employment in the green sector.
- Careers inspiration and information for all ages to inspire and inform individuals from primary age to adulthood about green jobs and careers and changes behaviours and perceptions towards green jobs. This will build on the work of the Green Jobs Summer School that took place this summer in West Yorkshire.
- A development plan and fund to support FE colleges to build capacity within the FE sector and train staff to develop the curriculum aligned to the needs of the green sector.
- An enhancement of the Business Sustainability West Yorkshire Programme that will support employers to identify, access and implement green employment and skills opportunities, transforming their business to support efficiency savings, safeguard jobs and support innovation and productivity.

Creative Skills

2.12 Skills are an essential component of the draft Culture, Heritage and Sport Framework and key to the growth of the creative economy in the region (which will see major 'year of culture' activities in each local authority between 2023-25).

2.13 The Culture Committee has developed a draft Culture Framework, and will oversee a plan of future culture, heritage and sports programmes. This includes an emerging pipeline of interventions are being developed and will be overseen by the Culture, Heritage and Sport Committee. These interventions will make the best use of available resources including the Skills Connect adult training offer, Adult Education Budget and future employment and skills programmes, allied with an allocation from the Culture Gainshare allocation.

Other future programmes

2.14 At its last meeting the Employment and Skills Committee endorsed the development of the interventions to support Young People and skills support for employers and a SME graduate pilot programme. These will be scoped with a range of partners through workshops, presentations and discussion.

No decisions about the content of programmes have been made and they are at an early stage of consultation.

- 2.15 The future interventions will draw on a wide range of evidence and research on what works, learning from the best practice that already exists in the Region and build on its strengths as well as other national and international examples.
- 2.16 Clear outcomes and outputs will be defined for each programme that respond to economic and labour market intelligence whilst meeting the ambitious employment and skills, equality and diversity and environment and sustainability priorities and targets in West Yorkshire.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1. This report outlines proposed interventions to tackle the climate emergency in relation to skills, people and jobs.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1. Skills programmes outlined in this report will work directly with those disproportionately affected in the labour market
- 4.2 Future employment and skills programmes 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
 - Percentage achieving qualifications at Level 3 & above
 - Percentage achieving higher level skills
 - Percentage attaining basic digital skills
 - 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)
 - Output per hour/regional productivity gap

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1. Our skills and workforce pipeline work will consider the impacts on people with protected characteristics. We are seeking to ensure that the skills offer the region has will enable everyone in the region, regardless of their background to have a thriving future. As we develop programmes for delivery, we will work to be explicit in targeting equality and diversity.
- 5.2. The Mayor's SME Graduate Programme will seek to target a range of graduates to increase diversity within SMEs in West Yorkshire. The

programme will work with universities that attract individuals who are first in family to gaining a university education as well as underrepresented groups.

- 5.3. The Green Skills work has been informed by research and consultation including representation from the West Yorkshire Green Skills Youth Programme which engaged with a diverse range of young people from across West Yorkshire. The programme worked with young people from each local authority area and with schools and community organisations that have a high number of students who receive free school meals.
- 5.4. Employment West Yorkshire has targets that include increasing engagement with individuals from underrepresented groups, supporting individuals who lack basic and essential skills and over 50's.
- 5.5. 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 of provision of digital skills, supporting the resolution of data poverty and the ongoing challenge of accessibility and connectivity. In line with the Equality Act (2010), diversity will be embedded throughout the Plan's targets.

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 directly arising from this report.

9. External Consultees

- 9.1. No external consultations have been undertaken.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1. The Committee notes the report and provides any comment.

11. Background Documents

None.

12. Appendices

None