



Report to:	Economic Scrutiny Committee
Date:	17 November 2023
Subject:	Schools engagement and apprenticeships
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1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1. To update the Committee on activity led by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority in relation to schools' engagement and apprenticeships.
- 1.2. To provide the requested data regarding young people's destinations in West Yorkshire.

2. Information

Context

- 2.1. Effective careers education, information, advice and guidance [CEIAG] promotes engagement with learning and improves the functioning of the education and training system. It can contribute to increasing students' engagement and success by clarifying the relevance of subjects to future opportunities. To make the most of opportunities to better connect a range of services for residents a radical shift is required in how services are designed and commissioned to ensure that all citizens for West Yorkshire can thrive in the future world of work across the employment and skills landscape of which careers is a critical, but not isolated, component. A deep dive evidence review is provided in Item 8 Appendix 1. Highlights are included below to demonstrate the rationale for the All-Age Careers Blueprint.
- 2.2. There are a range of socio-economic issues in West Yorkshire which could be addressed through a high-quality careers support offer, including:
 - The proportion of people who have no or low qualifications.
 - The increasing, and higher than nationally, prevalence of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).
 - Existing gender stereotyping and distinct patterns of occupational segregation by gender.
 - Under-representation of some ethnic groups with regard to some learning pathways and in some occupational segments

In an ever increasingly dynamic labour market where careers are no longer linear, careers support can also contribute to more effective matching of skills demand and supply by ensuring that individuals have access to rich, meaningful and relevant information about available career opportunities and the skills and learning pathways that provide access to them. In this way, careers support can help to minimise skills mismatches, reduce skill shortage vacancies and offset under-utilisation of skills. Finally, careers support facilitates social inclusion and social mobility; for example, by helping young people to develop the career management skills, social capital and networks for career success, by assisting unemployed people and labour market returners to re-engage with the world of work and by facilitating investment in skills and career development by people with low level qualifications or who are in low-paid work.

West Yorkshire All Age Careers Blueprint

- 2.3 With West Yorkshire's Local Authority (LA) partners, the Combined Authority is currently in the process of co-producing an All-Age Careers Blueprint with partners and key stakeholders, building on and complimenting the principles of the [Work Local model](#). A previous update has been provided to [Committee on 13th July](#); setting out the three main drivers for the project, which are summarised below: See also Item 8 Appendix 2 .
1. Based on the rationale summarised above, careers support raises the aspirations and career readiness of individuals with a direct link to productivity growth and increased employment participation. The All-Age Career Blueprint therefore has a direct link into the delivery of Mission 1 of the West Yorkshire Plan – 'A prosperous West Yorkshire, enabled by an inclusive economy with well-paid jobs' and the career element of the Employment and Skills Framework.
 2. To co-design a place-based model of good quality careers provision that is delivered at the level closest to individuals, to allow flexibility to focus on improve career outcomes for disadvantaged groups which are distinct in each area.
 3. To support conversations with Government to unlock further skills and employment related powers and funding, based on the Greater Manchester and West Midland Combined Authority Trailblazer Deals setting a precedent for devolved career and wider employment and skills provision.
- 2.4 The Institute for Employment Studies (IES), working collaboratively with the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS), has been commissioned to lead the development of the West Yorkshire All Age Careers Blueprint.
- 2.5 The first phase of the project was focussed on creating an evidence base across West Yorkshire to identify key opportunities and challenges and provide valuable context for wide stakeholder engagement.
- 2.6 IES and iCeGS have synthesised the available evidence on best practice in careers guidance, who accesses services and who does not, and the current policy landscape, as



well as analysis of regional labour market data. The Combined Authority and LA partners also undertook a light-touch mapping exercise to get a better understanding of the current, regional career provider landscape. 40 submissions were received from career providers in response to an online survey.

2.7 IES also hosted and facilitated a Theory of Change workshop with lead skills officers from Local Authorities, business, education and career providers to develop an initial overview of the existing career landscape, articulate ambitions for future ambitions and think about possible mechanisms for change. A selection of comments from the discussion can be seen below:

Target Groups	<p><i>“All, regardless of employment status”</i></p> <p><i>“Variety of age and circumstance, proactively focussed on groups who could be classed as disadvantaged [...]”</i></p> <p><i>“Young people with Special Educational Needs and disabilities (SEND) / Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)”</i></p> <p><i>“Adults”</i></p> <p><i>“Work with schools to improve performance towards career benchmarks”</i></p> <p><i>“Support for businesses [to offer] future careers opportunities in their organisation”</i></p>
Impact	<p><i>“Clearer understanding of routes into the career of choice”</i></p> <p><i>“Non-stereotyped decisions [...]”</i></p> <p><i>“It needs to be open for all at any point in their lives, not targeted for certain groups or at specific times”</i></p>



	<p><i>“Educational provision which has a link to the need of the economy to grow”</i></p>
	<p><i>“Employers recruit locally and can source their needs with confidence from local talent pool”</i></p>
	<p><i>“Normalising the use of career advice and guidance [...]”</i></p>
Outcomes	<p><i>“More people in good work”</i></p> <p><i>“Greater workforce diversity”</i></p> <p><i>“Improved retention in post16 & adult learning [...]”</i></p> <p><i>“Improved labour market status for most disadvantaged groups”</i></p> <p><i>“Job satisfaction and enjoying what you do [...]”</i></p> <p><i>“Less skills shortages reported as a barrier to economic growth”</i></p> <p><i>“Opportunities for people to move throughout their life and career”</i></p>
Input / Activities	<p><i>“Digital resources”</i></p> <p><i>“More engaging awareness activities (for all ages)”</i></p> <p><i>“Marketing of services [...]”</i></p> <p><i>“Capacity building – network of quality, independent careers advisers to deliver support”</i></p>



	<i>“Support for job seekers / career changers to be able to articulate skills and experience”</i>
Change Mechanism	<i>“Co-design with providers, employers and clients locally, based on data”</i> <i>“Greater sharing of information, opportunities and programmes, cross referrals and more working together”</i> <i>“Funding and good partnerships”</i> <i>“Build on existing infrastructure / best practice”</i> <i>“Employers”</i>

2.8 Wider consultation, co-designed with Local Authority partners and with key stakeholders, including employers, is planned to take place over autumn. Specifically, the following activity is planned:

- 15 virtual, in-depth stakeholder interviews with representatives of the education, training and career support providers, national parties as well as an extended session with senior skills officers from each of the five Local Authorities, led by IES.
- Public Consultation via YourVoice, supported by IES, led by the CA.
- Employer consultation via an online survey, supported by IES, led by the CA.
- Virtual stakeholder workshop to refine recommendations, led by IES.
- Virtual expert panel discussion with CEIAG experts to challenge and validate findings, led by IES.
- Stakeholder engagement with wider public sector partners and employment, skill and career boards and providers.

A more in-depth presentation on the interim findings will be available at the meeting and Member feedback will be invaluable in shaping this blueprint.

Delivery Updates

2.9 Schools partnerships activity

The Combined Authority is part-funded by the Careers and Enterprise Company as part of a national network of Careers Hubs. The West Yorkshire Careers Hub aims to support all 180+ secondary schools and colleges (Item 8 Appendix 3) in its network to make progress towards the Gatsby benchmarks of good careers guidance, ultimately improving young people's destinations, particularly the most disadvantaged. So far in this financial year 59 schools have made measurable improvements.

Through the Careers Hub, the following targeted activity has taken place over recent months:

- The 'Apprenticeship and Technical Education Pilot Project' (ATEP) aimed to support employers to mentor students to increase their knowledge about apprenticeship and technical education options. The project has now completed its final stage of delivery. The 42 students from year 10, 12 and 13 [from Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield Schools] involved increased their knowledge of apprenticeships and their confidence in applying. However, although the project increased awareness of technical education, students were not as confident in their deeper understanding of technical options (e.g. T Levels, HQTs). Employers involved have provided positive feedback and felt more confident in informing students about apprenticeships and technical education after receiving training. The provider, Amazing Apprenticeships, who are supporting the upscaling of this project, also received positive feedback. (ATEP Evaluation Report attached Item 8 Appendix 4).
- The Effective Transitions Fund recently enabled a group of girls in year 11 to engage with regional employers. "We Are IVE" was commissioned to deliver a series of tailored, in person workplace visits for the Education and Training Foundation students to West Yorkshire anchor businesses including Leeds Bradford Airport, KPMG and Burberry. Evaluation is currently underway. Additional funding has been offered to the Combined Authority by The Careers and Enterprise Company for a shorter-term intervention targeted at an additional 150 disadvantaged young people over the next 6 months.
- West Yorkshire's Enterprise Advisers (EAs - business volunteers recruited via the Careers Hub) continue to be key to supporting the region's schools and colleges. After identifying a shortage of volunteers to support Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and Pupil referral unit (PRU) schools within the regional Careers Hub, a " SEND EA Recruitment Campaign" was developed and delivered to recruit additional advisors. The campaign targeted social media, internal organisation communications channels and in-person recruitment events and has been highly successful, with over 200 enquires received.
- Working with Local Authority partners, the Careers Hub has been looking at destination data for year 11 and 12. Some areas have seen a significant increase in young people not in education, employment or training employment (NEETS) and where their destination is not known. The Careers and Enterprise Company has launched a national

fund to support system wide development to help reduce NEET figures. The Combined Authority's application, covering and working with Leeds and Bradford Local Authorities, has been successful with an award of £100,000.

2.10 FutureGoals

- The Futuregoals site is an all-age careers platform intended to inspire and inform people of all ages about the career opportunities in the West Yorkshire region. It also provides a route to engagement with employment and skills provision. In recent months, there has been a significant increase in the monthly reach achieved by the FutureGoals site. This has increased to 675,225 in August 2023, compared to 185,421 and 310,839 in June 2023 and July 2023 respectively. This increase is a reflection of an increase in social media campaigns including the employer side of the Skills Bootcamp Activity, Employment Support as well as Skills Connect campaigns all gaining traction and building on the gradual increase in reach in July 2023.

2.11 Apprenticeships

The following section provides a response to specific questions raised by the Committee relating to apprenticeships, together with an overview of the Combined Authority's activities in this field. Detailed data on apprenticeships is provided at Item 8 Appendix 5. In total, there were 15,849 apprenticeship starts by West Yorkshire residents during the 2021/22 academic year. Key points to note include:

- Apprenticeship starts grew by 9% in West Yorkshire in 2021/22 academic year, the same rate of growth as nationally, but remain 16% below pre-pandemic levels.
- All local authorities saw growth in starts during 2021/22, ranging from a 3% increase in Bradford to 18% growth in Wakefield and 16% in Calderdale. The rates of growth in Kirklees (9%) and Leeds (8%) were similar to the West Yorkshire average. Starts remain below pre-pandemic levels in all local authorities.
- During 2021/22, 46% of starts were for apprentices aged 25 and over, with 30% aged 19-24 and 24% aged under 19.
- Starts on Intermediate apprenticeships accounted for 27% of total starts (the same proportion as 2020/21 but down from 37% in 2018/19), Advanced apprenticeship starts contributed 44% (similar to the previous year) and Higher apprenticeships 29% (similar to the previous year but up from only 19% in 2018/19).
- Levy-funded starts now account for the majority of starts in West Yorkshire, contributing 60% of the total and 80% of Higher Apprenticeship starts.

2.12 Outcome figures published by Department for Education (DfE) indicate that 90% of apprentices who complete their apprenticeship in West Yorkshire enter sustained

employment, with 92% entering a sustained positive destination of some kind¹. These figures exactly match their respective England averages. It should be noted that a significant proportion of apprentices do not complete their apprenticeships. The DfE have not published average completion / achievement rates for local areas since before the pandemic and have no plans to do so in future, although rates for specific providers are available. The latest available figures for West Yorkshire for 2018/19 show that 63% of apprentices achieved overall in the region, just below the national average of 65%. However, we do know from national figures that achievement rates were adversely affected during the pandemic period, with latest national figure for 2021/22 standing at 53%.

- 2.13 Apprenticeship provision across West Yorkshire is broad-based in subject terms (see figures 11 and 13 of the appendix), although the profile of starts does diverge from the pattern of labour market demand based on vacancies (see figure 14 of the appendix). This is because apprenticeships provide a well-established route into some areas, like Construction, whilst they are under-developed in other fields, like Teaching and Lecturing. Also, access into apprenticeships in some subjects was disrupted during the pandemic and has not fully recovered since then. Moreover, the introduction of the levy has shaped the focus of apprenticeships, with a shift towards training existing staff, particularly in subject areas like Business Management.
- 2.14 Focusing specifically on higher apprenticeships, there is a concern that provision in the local area is narrowly concentrated in two broad subject areas, with a combined 76% of all higher level starts falling within Business, administration and law (43%) and Health, public services and care (33%). This proportion has remained fairly constant over recent years. Of the first of these subject areas most starts are in Business Management (24% of all starts) and Accountancy apprenticeships (13%); of the second, Health and social care (12%) and management and Nursing (13%) apprenticeships have the highest take-up. The shares of higher apprenticeships in the technical areas of Construction, Engineering and Information technology remain small; they currently account for 5%, 2% and 11% of total higher apprenticeship starts respectively. Engineering and Construction, in particular, are occupational areas within which apprenticeships are a staple part of people development arrangements at intermediate and advanced levels and offer a particularly valuable mechanism for addressing skills needs in these parts of the economy. An increase in higher apprenticeships would provide a valuable progression pathway to meet the shortages of higher skilled workers in these occupational areas.

¹ Further education outcome-based success measures (OBSM) show the percentage of further education learners going to or remaining in an education and/or employment destination in the academic year after achieving their learning aim. The most recent data reports on learners who achieved their aim in the 2019/20 academic year, and identifies their education and/or employment destinations the following year (2020/21). Further details here here [Further education: outcome-based success measures, Academic year 2019/20 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

- 2.15 Since September 2020, the Combined Authority has supported employers to engage with the full breath of the education system, including apprenticeships and technical education, via the part-ESF funded Skills for Growth programme which came to an end in September 2023. There was high demand for this service with 537 SMEs supported against a target of 351. In order to encourage employer investment in training, particularly around emerging skills, the team has been retained until 2026 through gainshare and local skills funding. A skills advisory service therefore remains available to support employers to create a pipeline of talent and upskill their staff, including through apprenticeships.
- 2.16 The [Apprenticeship Levy](#) is a UK tax on employers which is used to fund apprenticeship training. It is payable by all employers with an annual pay bill of more than £3 million, at a rate of 0.5% of their total pay bill. The West Yorkshire Levy Transfer Service is a free transfer service to support businesses to transfer up to 25% of their unspent apprenticeship levy to smaller businesses taking on apprentices. A transfer covers 100% of the training costs of the apprenticeship standard and avoids smaller businesses paying the 5% contribution towards the training. So far over £6m has been raised through the service including from Asda, Card Factory, Amazon, the University of Huddersfield and Kirklees Council. To date (since 2019), we have supported over 550 apprenticeships in 147 businesses – of which 45% of those businesses are located in the bottom 20% most deprived areas.

Higher education

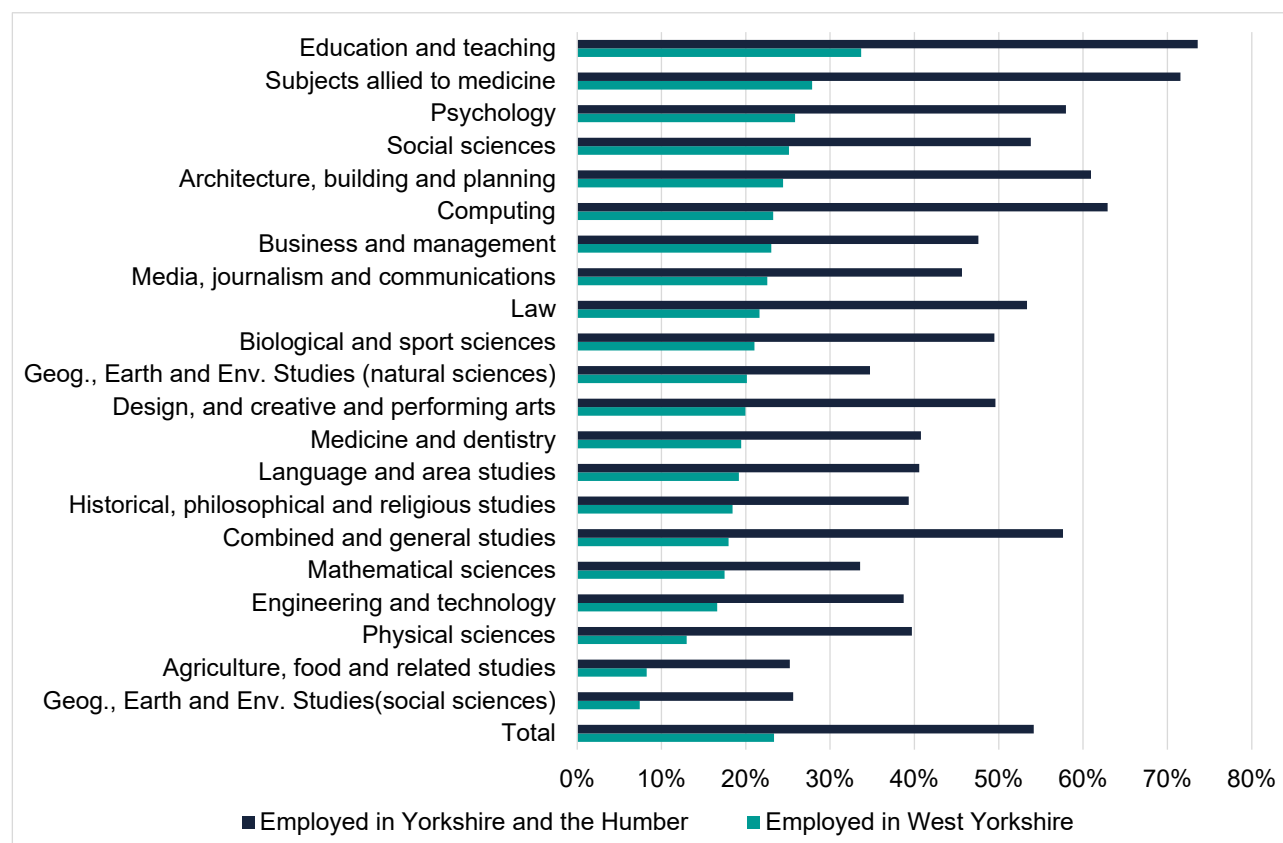
- 2.17 The following section provides a response to the question from the Committee regarding graduate retention in West Yorkshire. Based on the 2020/21 *Graduate Outcomes Survey*, around 54%² of employed qualifiers from West Yorkshire higher education institutions were in employment in Yorkshire and the Humber 15 months after graduation, with 23% in employment in West Yorkshire itself. The extent to which qualifiers are retained in West Yorkshire varies by subject, as set out in the figure below³. For some technical subjects, West Yorkshire retention rates are relatively low; for example, 8% for *Agriculture*⁴, 13% for *Physical Sciences*, 17% for both *Mathematical Sciences* and *Engineering and technology*. *Education* is at the top of the ranking, with a rate of 34%, followed by *Subjects allied to medicine* (28%).

² When “not known” destinations are excluded.

³ The retention rate estimates presented here differ from previous figures because of a shift from *Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education* survey to the *Graduate Outcomes Survey*. The census point in Graduate Outcomes is at approximately 15 months after gaining qualifications whereas for DLHE the main census point was at 6 months. There are also differences in the content and wording of the two questionnaires.

⁴ It should be noted that the number of qualifiers for this subject area was very small in 2020/21.

Proportion of qualifiers with Yorkshire and the Humber and West Yorkshire employment location at 15 months by subject



Base: UK domiciled leavers from WY institutions in employment after 15 months. Excludes not knowns

Source: Graduate Outcomes Survey, 2020/21

2.18 Retention rates vary by institution, with some institutions recruiting a greater proportion of their intake from the local area, whilst others attract students from across the country. Students from the local area are more likely to remain in West Yorkshire or Yorkshire and the Humber. For example, 77% of qualifiers from Leeds Trinity University remain in Yorkshire and the Humber and 36% in West Yorkshire, whilst only 36% of qualifiers from the University of Leeds in Yorkshire and the Humber and 16% in West Yorkshire. The subject specialisms of the institutions then impacts on retention rates by subject.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

3.1. A career support system, rooted in local economic information is also responsive to changing economic needs, including emerging requirements around green skills and businesses transitioning towards a net-zero carbon economy.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

4.1. The Future Ready Skills Commission found that, careers support is not just important because it contributes to individual motivation, career readiness and employability but

that these improvements in individual capability lead to the improved operation of the labour market, and greater social mobility and inclusion. There is then a direct link to productivity growth, higher pay and increased employment participation.

- 4.2. In addition, career inspiration, starting at primary school age, has been shown to impact social mobility and counteract the early formation of stereotypes about occupations, careers and pathways. Children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds benefitting the most from support.
- 4.3. The West Yorkshire All Age Career Blueprint will also support inclusive economic growth by placing a particular focus on those groups that face disadvantage through envisaging a regional career system that supports social mobility.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1. A comprehensive, yet simple, quality support offer to start, progress and change a career, which is rooted in local economic information and provision, is particularly important for those people facing disadvantage and/or do not have other available support in this area and those businesses that are experiencing difficulties recruiting or retaining skilled staff and those industries that face significant change due to economic change, e.g. through automation or a shift towards a net-zero carbon economy.
- 5.2. A priority for the West Yorkshire All Age Career Blueprint is to create a system that works for all ages, from primary school level to retirement age, with a particular focus on transition points.
- 5.3. The blueprint will also consider how careers education, information, advice and guidance can help address longstanding skills and employment gaps based on gender, ethnicity and ability as well as how to reach groups from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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. Comprehensive and robust consultation with stakeholders is planned to support the development of the West Yorkshire all Age Careers Blueprints, including: Local and



Combined Authority colleagues, education and training providers, CEIAG and employment support providers, employers and members of the public.

10. Recommendations

10.1 That the Committee notes the report and provides any feedback or comments.

11. Background Documents

Employment & Skills Committee, 13 July 2023: [Development and delivery of regionally coordinated careers activity](#)

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – [Evidence Deep Dive](#)

Appendix 2 – [West Yorkshire All Age Careers Blueprint – Draft Interim Report](#)

Appendix 3 – [Schools and Colleges in Careers Hub](#)

Appendix 4 – [ATEP Programme Evaluation](#)

Appendix 5 – [Apprenticeship data](#)