All Age Careers Blueprint for West Yorkshire

Draft Interim report

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October 2023

Institute for Employment Studies

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The Centre established in 1998 is the hub for careers research at the University of Derby, leading on research and consultancy to schools, education providers, the wider education sector, and Government. We have a lifelong focus and address education policy, practice, and research from early years to older workers. iCeGS core areas of focus include career education and guidance; career management skills; higher education; and SEND and inclusion.

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The terminology used to define ethnicity continues to evolve, and greater awareness has arisen about gender, cognitive differences, and disability. IES seeks to be a learning organisation and we are adapting our practice in line with these shifts. Our preference is to refer to people's own choice of descriptor(s) rather than impose standard categories upon them, although this is not always possible. In these cases, we are aligned with Race Disparity Unit (RDU) which uses the term 'ethnic minorities' to refer to all ethnic groups except white British. We embrace government guidance and refer to disabled people and neurodiverse people as society imposes the restrictions and obstacles these groups face. In certain circumstances we may refer to individuals as gender nonconforming when describing those who do not follow society's stereotypes based on the gender they were assigned at birth. We use images and illustrations in our publications that are well considered for relevance to the output and that promote diversity and inclusion. We do this by representing diverse identities, ethnicities, gender, abilities, and body types and by ensuring equities in power relationships within images.

IES project code: 5591

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Executive summary

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) has a bold vision to create a Blueprint for all age careers provision in the region. Working with the Institute for Employment Studies and the International centre for Guidance Studies, this interim report sets out initial findings of research which will form the basis of the Blueprint, a plan which will be well-evidenced, well-supported and which will set out how all residents and business in the region can prosper.

This research has set out some of the key principles for creating an All Age Careers Blueprint for West Yorkshire. It has drawn lessons from academic and research literature to understand the need for good careers guidance and what good practice looks like. To understand the local context, labour market information and demographic analysis describes the challenges for the region. This interim report has started to map the various provider of careers education, information, advice and guidance services in the region to understand coverage and gaps. Finally, stakeholders from across the region have collaborated to describe what an all age careers provision would aim to achieve which has resulted in a theory of change diagram and accompanying narrative.

Key findings

There are a number of key points that should be acknowledged when understanding considering how **careers guidance** is delivered to different audiences.

■ Understanding locally relevant skills needs and labour market information (LMI) enables guidance to be delivered which is relevant to the jobs on offer and the needs of employers in the local area

■ Starting guidance at a young age is key and, increasingly, evidence is suggesting that guidance should start at primary school age. Starting young can be more impactful in the longer term and this is particularly important when considering disadvantaged young people and those with additional needs

■ There is a need for lifelong guidance particularly considering Covid-19, Brexit, and the current cost of living crisis. These have changed the landscape of employment and work and have impacted how work is undertaken, by who, and where

■ Digital platforms are important and allow flexibility when giving guidance and when searching for it, however the issue of digital poverty must be acknowledged with an understanding of who and who does not have access to electronic devices and the internet

- It is harder to reach people in employment and those who are older. Extra effort should be put into targeting these cohorts of individuals as well as ensuring that those who are disadvantaged know how and where to access support
- Place based guidance is key to enabling people access guidance and support that is relevant to their local area and their contexts.

Additionally, there are a range of **labour market issues** in West Yorkshire that could be addressed through a high-quality careers support offer as part of a wider strategy to confront socio-economic issues.

- Relatively low qualification attainment among young people in WYCA at various stages of education, with young people in the region less likely to have achieved a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 than their national counterparts
- Significant prevalence of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), with around 3,500 young people aged 16 and 17 classed as NEET in 2022/23. This is 6.2 per cent of the overall cohort, a higher prevalence than nationally (5.2 per cent)
- Relatively low progression into higher education within some local authority areas in West Yorkshire, indicated for example in the proportion of pupils entering higher education by age 19 in Leeds (44 per cent) and Wakefield (40 per cent), compared with the national average (47 per cent)
- Significant drop-out rates in some learning pathways, with pre-pandemic figures showing that less than two-thirds of apprentices (63 per cent) completed/achieved in WYCA in 2018/19
- Gender stereotyping and distinct patterns of occupational segregation by gender, as well as under-representation of some ethnic groups with regard to some learning pathways and in some occupational segments
- Acute skill shortages in some parts of the economy and under-utilisation of skills, with employers in WYCA indicating that they find it difficult to fill more than a third of their total vacancies due to a shortage of people with the required skills
- Under-utilisation of skills, typified by people with higher level qualifications working in administrative, caring, retail and elementary roles despite being (notionally) over-qualified for roles at this level
- Discrepancies between the occupational profile of people in work and the occupational backgrounds of unemployed and inactive people, which suggests a potential misalignment between the skills held by individuals and those needed in the current labour market.

When it comes to the landscape for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) provision in the WYCVA region, the following findings emerged from a survey of 44 respondents which **maps careers provision** in the region.

- CEIAG providers tend to work for local organisations or national organisations with regional and local branches in WYCA. Most providers are concentrated in Leeds, with most working in Leeds alone and in no other area of the region

- There is a concentration of CEIAG providers in secondary and higher education, and further education and training. Most are part of CEIAG networks or are linked to other organisations focused on CEIAG

- Only a minority of providers in the survey classified their organisation as a primary provider of CEIAG, defined as organisations with CEIAG as their main function. Over half classified their organisation as a secondary provider of CEIAG, defined as organisations which have CEIAG as part of their function alongside other services

- Providers are most commonly publicly funded, with a minority funded both publicly and through other sources, and funded through other sources alone

- The majority of providers report that staff in their organisations hold a CEIAG specific qualification, and most have a mix of staff qualified at different levels (QCF Level 3, Level 4, Level 6, and Level 7). Only a third of providers offer CEIAG-specific training

- Around two fifths of providers work with young people up to 25 years alone. All other providers offer services for all ages. Providers generally have experience of working with disadvantaged groups (NEET, ethnic minorities, disabled people, distant from the labour market, over 50s, care experienced, etc.). Some providers work with specific industry sectors (construction, health and social care, the digital and green economy)

- All providers offer a number of services, with the most common including: advice on learning and training opportunities; CV and application support; labour market information; group activities; job search support; employability programmes; one to one career guidance; skills assessment

- The most common ways that clients learn about CEIAG providers is through education providers, online or through their own search, through word of mouth, from the Jobcentre, and from training providers

- Challenges identified by providers in terms of provision of CEIAG are limited funding and lack of trained staff. In terms of challenges related to access, these are clients' lack of awareness of provision, clients with limited digital access, transport and accessibility, and lack of interest or engagement.

Alongside mapping of the current CEIAG provision landscape, the research engaged with 11 stakeholders across the region (local authorities, education and training providers, third sector, employer bodies) to understand their **vision for an All Age Careers Blueprint**. Key elements for the realisation of the Blueprint identified by stakeholders include:

- Key target groups for which tailored provision should be developed through the Blueprint include disadvantaged or vulnerable young people; adults of diverse ages and employment status; and educational institutions and staff

- Principles which should guide the design of activities for the Blueprint, include accessibility of services, alignment with the WYCA Employment and Skills Framework, tailored and exploratory approaches, quality assurance, and universal access

- These principles can be adopted to develop a more coherent and coordinated CEIAG offer, streamlining access to continuous support, strengthening employer involvement,

raising awareness of CEIAG provision, including the voices of service users in the development of CEIAG, and promoting a more diverse CEIAG workforce

■ The levers for change, which are conditions that will make the Blueprint work include enhancing connectivity between CEIAG providers; leveraging data and evidence to gain insights into needs and measure the impact of changes; ensuring consistent and stable funding; enhancing communication and collaboration between providers; encouraging cultural change among employers; focusing on inclusivity, expanding efforts to work with people with Level 2 qualifications; and normalising the use of CEIAG among individuals of all ages

■ The primary outcome of creating the Blueprint will be an established and shared 'cradle to grave' West Yorkshire careers offer, with equitable access to free, local, all age, and demographic-inclusive careers support. Additional outcomes will be seen specifically for CEIAG providers, individuals, employers, and the education sector

■ Impacts will include individuals from all ages and backgrounds having the knowledge and support to have rewarding careers across WYCA; employers contributing to the skills and career development of a diverse and inclusive local workforce; increased attendance and engagement in education leading to improved progression and retention in positive destinations; and more people in good work with improved labour market status and a reduction in skills shortages, leading to social and economic growth.

Interim recommendations

From this stage of research, draft, high-level recommendations have been included in this report. These will be used in the next phase of work and will be tested, debated and weighted through further stakeholder consultations, a public consultation and further work with the Combined Authority.

Recommendation 1: Enhancing Awareness and Access for All

Addressing awareness and access barriers for residents of all ages and groups is imperative. Residents should easily locate CEIAG support in their proximity, whether in person, via phone, or online. Initiatives should be aimed at making CEIAG services more visible and accessible to adult and disadvantaged populations.

Recommendation 2: Bridging the Digital Divide

Recognizing the challenges posed by digital poverty, it is essential to ensure that online CEIAG services do not exclude individuals lacking digital resources. A concerted effort is needed to provide inclusive access to digital resources, ensuring that digital barriers do not hinder individuals from benefiting from online CEIAG resources

Recommendation 3: Sustaining Stakeholder Collaboration

Ongoing collaboration and information sharing among educational institutions, employers, local authorities, and CEIAG service providers is crucial. The development of the Blueprint is just the initial step in a broader initiative. Commitment to collaboration should be sustained, as this will be pivotal in realizing the Blueprint's objectives and ensuring a cohesive approach to CEIAG.

Recommendation 4: Cultivating education to business relations

Foster robust and mutually beneficial partnerships among educational institutions, employers, and CEIAG providers to collaboratively design and implement customized training and work experience programmes. These initiatives should be strategically tailored to the unique skill gaps identified within West Yorkshire's dynamic labour market.

Recommendation 4: Establishing Rigorous Minimum Standards

Efforts should be made to establish and enforce minimum standards for the delivery of CEIAG services, incorporating recognized benchmarks such as the Gatsby Benchmarks for school-age individuals and the Quality in Careers Standard for adults. These standards should be rigorous, ensuring that quality is maintained and that all individuals, regardless of age, receive comprehensive and high-quality CEIAG.

Recommendation 5: Supporting Transitions and Skill Enhancement

CEIAG services should focus on supporting young people during educational transitions and offer diverse experiences and encounters that highlight the benefits of qualifications and their relevance to the world of work. Ongoing support should be provided to individuals as they enter the workforce, encouraging upskilling, reskilling, and reducing dropout rates.

Recommendation 6: Equitable Provision Across the Region

WYCA should conduct a thorough review of the mapping evidence in conjunction with funding and devolution information. The aim is to establish comprehensive CEIAG provision across the entire region. Specialized provisions should target skills gaps, mismatches, and underutilization, ensuring that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals receive equitable support, thus promoting a more inclusive and balanced regional workforce.

Recommendation 7: Recommendation 7: Diversifying and Building Capacity Within the CEIAG Workforce

By investing in the professional development and capacity-building of CEIAG professionals, WYCA can create a more inclusive, responsive, and diverse careers support ecosystem, which can help address wider labour market disparities. This initiative aligns with the overarching vision of the All Age Careers Blueprint, which aims to empower individuals from all backgrounds to enter and thrive in the world of work.

1   Introduction

1.1   Background to the research

Commissioned by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA), the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) worked with the International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCeGS) to map careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) provision in the WYCA region to understand the availability, quality and impact of CEIAG services for young people and adults, and support the development of an All Age Careers Blueprint.

As WYCA prepares for further devolution of careers funding alongside the adult education budget, it is a key time to look to bring together skills, knowledge and expertise alongside high quality data to create an All Age Careers Blueprint for West Yorkshire. This is a unique opportunity to develop the strategic direction of a local careers policy that will meet the needs of the residents of West Yorkshire. WYCA can ensure that the next steps for careers provision is tailored to the needs of local businesses and to strengthen economic development. The All Age Careers Blueprint can align education and training programmes with the needs of local businesses, ensuring that a skilled workforce can contribute to the regional economy. The Blueprint can take into account the unique characteristics, industries and opportunities within the West Yorkshire region and make it responsive to the local context rather than relying on centralised policies.

Through this commissioned work, the Combined Authority can identify skills gaps or shortages and take proactive steps to bridge the gaps by bringing together educational institutions, careers providers and employers to create a targeted programme of provision that addresses specific regional skills needs. This will support the regional aims within the Employment and Skills Framework. Effective regional careers provision can also promote social mobility and inclusion by ensuring that individuals from all backgrounds have access to high-quality careers guidance, regardless of socio-economic status.

The idea of a 'Blueprint' is about bringing together a plan for how a commitment for all age careers provision could be enacted. As such, the research will bring together research evidence for the best material or components to use, and ensure that this is a plan that works for the WYCA region. This interim report presents findings and recommendations from the first stage of the research. It will be used to inform and underpin the second stage of the research (involving consultations and roundtable discussions with stakeholders, as well as a series of public consultations led by WYCA) as well as future work and investments that WYCA and partners make in the CEIAG space to support devolution efforts.

1.2   Method

The research approach for the interim report comprised a two-stage methodology including desk research consisting of a literature review and data analysis, and consultations, including a mapping exercise and Theory of Change workshop

1.2.1   Desk research

The first stage focused on desk-based research, collating and synthesising the available evidence on best practice in careers guidance, the current policy landscape and access to this support, as well as analysis of regional labour market data. This information helped situate the current research within the unique context of the West Yorkshire region.

The **literature review** incorporated:

■ Evidence of best and emerging practice in careers guidance at local, regional, national and international levels, exploring 'what works' for other local regions, as well as taking evidence at a national and international level.

■ An exploration of who does and does not currently have access to careers support, particularly in West Yorkshire, and how other areas are tackling this.

■ A review of careers education and support policy at local, national and regional levels, with a focus on their strategic alignment.

A range of sources were reviewed to surface relevant literature including both academic and policy literature The review was guided by a structured protocol and coding framework.

The **data analysis** developed from a collaboration with the WYCA Research & Intelligence (R&I) team through consultancy support. It built on the existing detailed insight and expertise held by WYCA to integrate into the research the wealth of labour market data insight, relevant to the scope of the project. The analysis included a focus on skills supply and demand, employment rates and access to the labour market for different sections of the population, including disadvantaged groups.

1.2.2   Consultations

Following the desk-based research, the research undertook the first stage of consultations (the second stage will be presented in the final report) to map the careers landscape within West Yorkshire and identify the main priorities for a Careers Blueprint and refine the emergent recommendations.

The first stage of the consultations comprised of a **mapping exercise** to identify the range of providers of CEIAG across West Yorkshire. This encompassed

1. those with CEIAG as their primary function with trained staff who provide careers services (this group can also include individual careers specialists)

2. those with CEIAG as part of their function who may have access to trained staff and relevant accreditation (eg Matrix), and deliver careers services alongside other services and will include all education providers (schools, colleges and universities), and

3. organisations with an interest in CEIAG with staff who are largely untrained yet act in a critical role to signpost to appropriate services many of whom are charities and not-for-profit organisations.

The mapping exercise was conducted through a short online survey, capturing data on the type of provider, provider specialism, target groups, modes of delivery, and their links to wider employment and skills provision.

A virtual **Theory of Change workshop** was then carried out, involving 11 West Yorkshire stakeholders representing the combined authority, each of the five local authorities, the education and training sectors, and the third sector. The workshop supported stakeholders to develop an overview of the existing careers landscape in the region, identifying key actors and relationships, as well as target groups for provision, best practice approaches, and where current gaps exist and/or improvements are needed. The Theory of Change was developed to articulate the aims for the All Age Careers Blueprint and highlight where aspects of the existing system can be simplified or work better in future.

1.3   About this report

This report presents the interim findings for the research supporting the development of the All Age Careers Blueprint for West Yorkshire. The report is structured as follows:

■ Section 2 – Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) in context. This section presents the findings from a literature review exploring evidence of best and emerging practice in CEIAG at local, regional, national and international levels

■ Section 3 – The WYCA skills and labour market. This section presents findings from the analysis of Labour Market Information (LMI), exploring key labour market challenges and opportunities in each of the individual areas within West Yorkshire

■ Section 4 – CEIAG provision in the region. This section presents the findings from a mapping exercise aimed at identifying the key providers of CEIAG across the West Yorkshire Combined Authority area

■ Section 5 – A vision for an All Age Careers Blueprint. This section presents the findings from the Theory of Change workshop led with stakeholders across WYCA to develop a vision for the All Age Careers Blueprint

■ Section 6 – Interim conclusions and recommendations. This section presents initial conclusions and recommendations for the development of the Blueprint, drawing on findings from all of the previous sections.

2   Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) in context

This section presents the findings from a literature review exploring evidence of best and emerging practice in CEIAG at local, regional, national and international levels.

2.1   What is CEIAG?

Career education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) and how it can be used to support individuals as a lifelong process can be a complex and challenging endeavour, particularly with a constantly changing society and economy. The OECD uses Watt's (2004, p.19) work which defines career guidance as

> *'services intended to assist people, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training, and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Career guidance helps people to reflect on their ambitions, interests, qualifications, and abilities'.*

This definition has since been adopted by the Department for Education in its guidance on what statutory duty looks like. Over the last decade, significant government reform has been undertaken to shape best practice in careers guidance in England. Since 2013, local authority-maintained schools in England have been required to provide impartial career guidance to pupils from years 8 to 13. In 2017, the government's Careers Strategy outlined the need for accessible career guidance for all individuals living in England and stated that by providing high-quality career guidance the aim is that people across the country are provided the opportunity to thrive in their careers, contributing to 'build[ing] a country that works for everyone' (DfE, 2017, p. 5). In 2022, the requirement for schools to provide career guidance was extended to pupils in year 7 and students in all academies.

2.2   What good career guidance looks like

Over the last few years in England with the growing acknowledgement of the importance of career guidance, there has been a push in the need to discuss career guidance in a more concise and informative manner. To date, much of the work surrounding careers guidance has focused on young people, however, more recently the concept of career guidance for adults in England has become a widely discussed topic.

2.2.1   Local career strategies

Since the establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPS), Career Hubs and more recently Combined Authorities, there has been a focus on assessing and providing career

guidance opportunities at local levels, which can be adapted to the needs of the local area and the local labour markets. With the acknowledgement of the need for lifelong guidance, and not just that which is concentrated at school and college level, over the last few years there has been increasing support being provided for adults with a focus on the needs and availability of jobs regionally.

An example of this transformation in practice is the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). In 2020, GMCA, with funding from the European Social Fund, launched its Skills for Growth programme and, as of 2023 the programme has helped more than 20,000 residents in Greater Manchester gain new skills and progress their careers, and 3,800 SMEs have also been supported. Similarly, The Greater London Combined Authority has developed its own Skills Roadmap, which emphasises the need to make skills provision more locally relevant and highlights the need for accessibility of adult education and skills provision, particularly for those who need it most.

2.2.2   Careers in education

The 2017 Careers Strategy emphasised the need for schools and colleges in England to use the Gatsby Benchmarks to improve and structure careers provision. The Gatsby Good Career Guidance report (2014) highlights the need for every young person to have access to high-quality career guidance to enable them to make informed decisions about their future. The Gatsby report identifies eight benchmarks by which careers guidance in schools and colleges should be measured. In the years since the report was published the Gatsby Benchmarks for good career guidance have been adopted into statutory guidance for schools and guidance for colleges in England, with 84 per cent of schools and colleges now engaging with the Benchmarks, gaining increased attention from researchers, educators, and policymakers (Education Committee, 2023).

Primary education

Over the last few years, there has been an acknowledgement of the need to engage children from a young age in discussions around careers, and particularly the need to provide career support to children of all ages and not just during the transitional period from education to employment. The Careers & Enterprise Company have developed resources and a website specifically tailored for career guidance at primary school level. The aim of the work is to introduce primary aged children to career-related learning, broadening horizons, challenging stereotypes, and helping them to develop skills that will enable them to reach their full potential. The resources include a toolkit providing lesson activities, guidance for governors, a quiz for teachers and case studies to illustrate how the resources can be used in practice. Added to this, there is increasing evidence and research to support the need for career guidance to be provided as soon as children start school in order to have the maximum effect on young people. Additionally, Gottfredson (1981) argues that career choice development can start at a young age, with children aged three being able to develop an understanding of careers.

Careers guidance for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Research into providing careers guidance to individuals with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) has typically focused on young people who have recently left compulsory education. Hanson et al. (2017) have argued that transitioning young people into the workplace is complex, however, it has proved more challenging for young people with SEND. To address these challenges, there is a growing evidence base about young people with SEND and their experiences of careers guidance, and what best practice looks like to support them. Also, Aston et al. (2005, p. 102) longitudinal research, recorded and tracked the progress of SEN young people from education into early adulthood, identifying two models that young people experienced: the 'developmental model' and 'booster model' (p. 102). These two models suggest that there is not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to guide young people with SEN or SEND in their careers journey, due to the variety of specific needs that each individual requires, when it comes to careers support. Jenkin (2021) reiterates the importance of tailoring careers guidance to the individual needs of young people with SEND, arguing that should not assume how capable those with SEND are in their careers but instead communicate and collaborate with these individuals, as well as their parents/carers, on what their capacity levels are.

Careers guidance in universities

As well as careers education, information, advice and guidance being conducted in schools and colleges, universities are important providers of career guidance and employability support for students and graduates. Within West Yorkshire Combined Authority, there are six universities: University of Bradford, University of Huddersfield, University of Leeds, Leeds Art University, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds Trinity University and York University. These institutions provide students with personal guidance (similar to schools and colleges) regarding career options during and post-university, completing application forms, writing CVs and establishing what students can do with their degrees. Students have access to online services where they can search for job and volunteering opportunities, as well as resources and guides on how to write cover letters and prepare for interviews. Therefore, the wide range of services universities within the West Yorkshire Combined Authority are evidence of best practice when it comes to providing good career guidance to young adults who are entering the workplace post-graduation.

2.2.3   Careers advice and guidance for adults

The concept of career describes an individual's pathway through life, learning and work. Career guidance, therefore, can support individuals towards better vocational opportunities and help develop a prosperous and well-functioning society. Through good quality career guidance, individuals can discover more about themselves, work, leisure and learning which in turn enables them to develop their futures, whether they are at the start of their career journey, or they are embarking on a mid-life career change. IES research for BIS (BIS 2013) identified five distinct approaches to career decision-making, which include: strategic; exploratory; opportunistic; impulsive; and passive. The career

decision-making process that individuals use can be seen to be affected by the extent to which they explore wider options for work and learning, and the extent to which they look ahead and reflect on and understand their own interests and preferences (BIS, 2013).

Consequently, the need for adults to have access to lifelong career guidance and support has been championed extensively in recent years (Career Development Policy Group, 2022; Policy Connect, 2021; Blustein, 2019). As a result of evolving economic challenges including Brexit, the post-pandemic realignment of the workforce and the current cost of living crisis the working landscape in which both adults and young people are trying to navigate a future has become increasingly opaque. The challenge for many adults is that not only is there a lack of access to career guidance, but where it does exist there is a lack of knowledge and understanding of when, where and how to access it (Policy Connect, 2021). This is specifically exacerbated in England, which does not have an all age service resulting in the fragmentation of careers guidance provision, both in terms of the locus of policy (DfE and DWP), competition between public and private sector suppliers and potential differential impacts depending on the delivery agent.

It is of particular importance that those individuals who face disadvantage have greater access to careers support. Ensuring that young, disadvantaged people entering the job market are supported in their transition is particularly important as it is an age-old issue that disadvantaged young people face more barriers during their education and route to employment than individuals who do not experience disadvantage (Pennacchia et al., 2018; Demie and Lewis, 2010; MacLeod et al., 2015).

2.2.4   International perspectives on careers guidance

Career guidance is provided to some extent across the globe, and what guidance and support looks like varies significantly, but most countries have programmes, charities, or organisations that can be accessed by individuals. In 2014 the government in Ontario, Canada, developed the policy Creating Pathways to Success: An Education and Career/Life Planning Program for Ontario Schools. The policy highlights curriculum expectations to provide opportunities to relate classroom learning to education and life planning for children in kindergarten to Grade 12. As well as this, the Dutch approach towards career guidance has focused increasingly on the self-reliance and responsibility of all job seekers in the Netherlands. The Dutch system has adopted a bottom-up approach which relies on schools developing their own CIAG initiatives while following national guidance. This approach means that CIAG is monitored by the Educational Inspectorate but gives ownership to schools to address regional issues such as labour market needs and allows schools to adapt learning to the needs of the individual school and student population (Cedefop, 2020).

2.2.5   Web-based careers guidance

The emergence of web-based career guidance emphasises how the ways and means that individuals, regardless of age, access careers guidance is more flexible and varied than ever. Being able to access web-based career guidance increases the likelihood of increased volumes of individuals accessing support and guidance. Hooley, Hutchinson

and Watts (2010) identified the following eight trends which highlighted the potential of web-based career platforms: being communal, collectivising knowledge, individualisation, recognising time and place, located in the cloud, free or almost free, diverse and integrated, and finally Knight et al. (2021) added games. As technology has developed, these trends have integrated into career platforms and utilised to best effect both regionally and nationally. Whilst web-based careers guidance is increasing, there is a need to acknowledge the issues relating to digital poverty. For many individuals, digital technology has been increasingly integrated into modern life, however with the development of technology comes an increasing divide between individuals who can afford to buy and access it and those who cannot. Digital Poverty Alliance states that 53 per cent of people offline cannot afford an average monthly broadband bill and 26 per cent of young people do not have access to a laptop or similar device. When considering career guidance and those who need to access it, the concept of digital poverty and digital exclusion must be acknowledged and taken into consideration.

2.3   Factors that inform people's decisions around CEIAG

IES research for BIS (2013) on adult career decision-making found that it is a complex process which is not always rational. The career decision-making process that individuals used was affected by their decision-making style and as referred to earlier in this section, five distinct approaches to career decision-making were identified. The extent to which they explored wider options for work and learning, and the extent to which they looked ahead and reflected on and understood their own interests and preferences were also determined by these decision-making styles (BIS, 2013). Additionally, career decisions tend to be made in the context of the familiar; family and friends are important sources of support for work and learning decisions (BIS, 2013). The value of careers information and inspiration is often overlooked by individuals as well as by institutions with statutory responsibilities for providing advice (WYCA, 2020c).

Furthermore, employment status, age and gender call also influence how people access CEIG services.

■ **By employment status: People in employment are harder to reach than unemployed people in receipt of benefits.** It is harder to reach adults in the workplace with messages about careers and re-training as they are not accessing careers provision available at places of learning or job centres. (WYCA, 2020c).

■ **By age: Young people are easier to reach and have more access than older people to careers support.** Analysis of Careers and Enterprise Company's (CEC) national data on student career readiness from the Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) suggests that age is a significant factor in how 'career ready' young people are, with students possessing more careers knowledge and skills as they get older (CEC, 2022b). In West Yorkshire, regional data from the Spring 2023 Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ) suggests that young people are generally 'career ready' (CEC, 2023).

Older people are hard to reach unless they are unemployed and/or engaged with services. IES research for BIS found that older people accessing formal careers services usually did so via social workers, learning providers or Jobcentre Plus (BIS, 2013). There is a great need for careers advice for older people in employment, and re-training is required especially in sectors going through significant structural change such as manufacturing. (WYCA, 2020c).

■ **By gender: The self-referral nature of the current careers system adversely affects women compared to men, and in particular, lower attainers, working class and minority ethnic women** where relevant personal and professional networks are often weaker. (WYCA, 2020c). The first annual State of the Region Report for West Yorkshire on regional performance (WYCA, 2021b) highlighted some key labour market differences by gender and regarding travel autonomy. Women are more highly qualified than men but are less likely to be employed in comparison to men. Their economic inactivity rate is higher as many inactive women look after the family/home. However, the employment rate gap has fallen in recent years. (WYCA, 2021b). As elsewhere, a gender pay gap exists within the region, a reflection on the high proportion of part-time jobs taken by women, which are generally of lower hourly pay (WYCA, 2021b). There are also notable differences in transport habits between men and women e.g., they are less likely to have a driving licence or access to a car (WYCA, 2021b).

2.4   Place-based careers guidance

Place matters and is an important factor when it comes to accessing careers guidance with unfairness in the provision available in coastal communities, urban and rural areas, and even down to postcode levels. The concept of place plays an important role in not only young people's exposure and access to a range of services and opportunities that support positive transitions but also adults' exposure and opportunities (Bright, 2020). The interplay between economic and social deprivation and place contributes to unemployment and NEET rates, and this can often be attributed to a lack of access to opportunities for people depending on where they live, therefore place-based approaches need to be adopted to recognise and challenge these disadvantages (Youth Employment UK, 2023). The adoption of place-based approaches to careers guidance is not simple, it is reliant on a number of factors which include availability of funding and provision at local and national levels, access to good quality and up to date data, improvements in transport and digital communication and a bigger focus on local labour market needs.

A report by Career Connect demonstrates the importance of having locally focused solutions in addressing youth unemployment. The Mapping the Future (2023) report based on Manchester, found that there are huge disparities in the numbers of NEETs across the city wards, highlighting the need for a localised understanding of the needs of young people and how the provision can be adapted to meet these needs. Evidence in the report shows that young people in areas with high levels of unemployment are no less likely to see opportunities than young people in other areas, which suggests that it is the type of provision and its accessibility that is the problem.

2.4.1 The West Yorkshire Combined Authority

West Yorkshire is an essential component of the Northern Powerhouse. But it has been underinvested in as a region, meaning that the post-pandemic recovery began from a more challenging position than many other parts of the UK. West Yorkshire has a highly diverse population, with 18 per cent of people coming from ethnic minority backgrounds (compared to 14.5 per cent nationally). Careers provision already exists within the region, including The Employment Hub Programme and The Enterprise Adviser Network (WYCA, 2021a). WYCA et al's. (no date 2) report also sets out The West Yorkshire Plan and its five constituent Local Authorities'[1] missions for 2040.

This current research builds on work that has gone to already to understand how employment and skills can work together in the region, making use of current devolution powers. In addition, much preparation has been going on readying the region for further devolution in the near future.

Adult Education Budget priorities in West Yorkshire

The purpose of the adult education budget (AEB) is to encourage and provide adults with the opportunity to learn new skills that are needed for the workplace. The priorities for the AEB in West Yorkshire are to: support the unemployed to gain and sustain employment; unlock progression opportunities and career adaptability through skills, particularly for those on low wages and with insecure work; make learning more inclusive to support disadvantaged residents; to increase the supply of skills to support key sectors in West Yorkshire and; improve West Yorkshire's resilience by identifying and delivering the skills needed for the future. (WYCA, 2020a)

Devolution

A number of reports from WYCA (2020b, 2020c, no date 1) argue that the adult skills system should be devolved to enable funding to be organised and used differently. WYCA (2020b) describes the current adult skills system as 'complex and fragmented'. Workforce statistics indicate that two-thirds of the 2020 workforce have left full-time education and are in employment. They will need ways to access and learn new skills to remain suited to the rapidly changing labour market. WYCA also believes that adult skills and careers funding should be devolved to enable WYCA to meet both local residents' needs and local labour market requirements. (WYCA, 2020b).WYCA Skills System Blueprint and Framework

In September 2020, WYCA published its Blueprint for a Future-Ready Skills System (WYCA, 2020d). It set out how greater devolution would create a skills system for the 21st century – that individuals can access, and employers can use to recruit the employees that they need.

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[1] Calderdale, Bradford, Kirkless, Leeds and Wakefield.

In June 2021, WYCA published its Employment and Skills Framework, the aim of which was to 'create a diverse, inclusive, and highly skilled workforce' (WYCA, 2021a). The Framework consists of 1) Quality technical education; 2) Great education connected to the business – including locally-rooted careers information and learning, informed by employers, which inspires and enables informed choices to support personal ambitions and progression in work; 3) Accessing and progressing in good work; 4) Creating a culture of investment in workforce skills; 5) Driving innovation and productivity through high-level skills (WYCA, 2021a).

2.4.2 Access to careers support in West Yorkshire

WYCA's (2020c) considers what CEIAG is currently given across all years, and finds it problematic; confusing, unequal, and unresponsive. The careers landscape is 'crowded, complex and fragmented' with many key players, including, National Careers Service, Jobcentre Plus, Office for Students and national retraining scheme. New interventions are frequently introduced by different government departments, with little regional oversight or accountability. This results in a lack of integration with local services like employment, housing, and education. There also is an overreliance on employers to fill the gaps.

Access issues

Currently, access to careers support is unequal (WYCA, 2020c). The current system operates through self-referral, adversely affecting certain groups including females, lower attainers, working class and minority ethnic groups where personal networks are often weaker. Provision is mainly aimed at those out of work to find a job. The current system doesn't encourage employed people to consider career options including retraining. For those who are eligible, support isn't always clearly signposted, or responsive enough to adapt to rapid changes in the local economic climate. (WYCA, 2020c). In order to provide high-quality careers support that meets the needs of all local residents WYCA (2020c) recommends that funding should be devolved in order to successfully support people into stable jobs and long-lasting careers.

3   The WYCA skills and labour market

This section presents findings from the analysis of Labour Market Information (LMI), examining the role of careers support in relation to key labour market issues in WYCA. It summarises the nature and scale of these issues in order to demonstrate the rationale for an All Age Careers Blueprint [2]. A full discussion, and list of figures, of key labour market issues outlined in this section is included in Appendix 1.

Effective careers education, information, advice and guidance 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. There are a range of issues in West Yorkshire could be addressed through a high-quality careers support offer as part of a wider strategy to confront socio-economic issues:

- **Relatively low qualification attainment among young people in West Yorkshire at various stages of development.** For example, only 77 per cent of young people in West Yorkshire achieve a qualification at Level 2 equivalent by age 19 compared with a national average of 82 per cent. The proportion falls to 72 per cent for Bradford. The proportion achieving a qualification at Level 3 by age 19 is 55 per cent, 6 points lower than the national average of 61 per cent.

- **Significant prevalence of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).** Around 3,500 young people aged 16 and 17 in West Yorkshire were classed as NEET in 2022/23. This is 6.2 per cent of the overall cohort, a higher prevalence than nationally (5.2 per cent) and an increase on 2021/22 (5.5 per cent).

- **Relatively low progression into higher education within some local authority areas in West Yorkshire**. For example, the proportion of pupils entering higher education by age 19 is 44 per cent in Leeds and 40 per cent in Wakefield, compared with a national average of 47 per cent.

- **Significant drop-out rates in some learning pathways**. For example, pre-pandemic figures show that less two-thirds of apprentices (63 per cent) completed / achieved in West Yorkshire in 2018/19. (This is similar to the national average).

Research evidence suggests that when students have been exposed to substantial careers education from a young age, they are more likely to express broader career

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[2] NB: This section of the report was produced by the WYCA Research and Intelligence Team, with consultancy support form the Institute for employment Studies

expectations and aspirations and are less likely to be constrained by societal and/or familial pressures. This is relevant to a number of labour market issues:

■ **Gender stereotyping and distinct patterns of occupational segregation by gender**. For example, whereas females account for 52 per cent of all apprenticeship starts in West Yorkshire and 83 per cent of starts in the subject area of Health, public services and care, they make up only 7 per cent of apprenticeship starts in Construction. Similarly, only 2 per cent of people working in Construction trades in West Yorkshire are female, whereas 92 per cent of people working in Secretarial occupations are female.

■ **Under-representation of some ethnic groups with regard to some learning pathways and in some occupational segments**. For example, only 20 per cent of apprenticeship starts among young people aged 16-24 relate to people from ethnic minorities (including white minorities) even though 36 per cent of West Yorkshire's population aged 16-24 are from a minority group. People from the Pakistani ethnic group account for 8 per cent of residents in employment in West Yorkshire but only 2 per cent of people working in Culture, media and sports occupations. Conversely, they contribute 22 per cent of people employed in Transport and mobile machine drivers' roles.

A key purpose of the labour market is to match the skills required by employers with the capabilities of current and potential employees. Careers support can contribute to more effective matching 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 these. In this way, careers support can help to minimise skills mismatches that impact on business performance and the ability of individuals to fulfil their potential. There are a number of dimensions to these mismatches:

■ **There are acute skill shortages in some parts of the economy.** Employers in West Yorkshire indicate that they find it difficult to fill more than a third of their total vacancies due to a shortage of people with the required skills. These skill shortage vacancies are most acute for occupations that demand substantial technical skills combined with workplace experience, ranging from professional roles in health, engineering and digital to a variety of skills trades such as electricians.

■ **Under-utilisation of skills is a significant challenge in West Yorkshire** and is typified by people with higher level qualifications working in administrative, caring, retail and elementary roles despite being (notionally) over-qualified for roles at this level. Close to a third (30 per cent) of employers in West Yorkshire say that they have workers whose skills/qualifications are in advance of those needed for the job. Census data for West Yorkshire indicate that 120,000 people working in non-graduate roles (as their main job) hold qualifications at Level 4 and above. This is equivalent to 20 per cent of all people working in non-graduate roles.

■ **There are marked differences between the occupational profile of people in work and the occupational backgrounds of unemployed and inactive people** who would like a job, which suggests a potential misalignment between the skills held by

individuals and those needed in the current labour market. The occupational background of both the unemployed and inactive is weighted towards lower-skilled occupations, principally the lowest skilled elementary roles.

Careers support facilitates social inclusion and social mobility. It does so, 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.

However, young people facing disadvantage are much less likely to engage with a range of education and training opportunities. Pupils who were eligible for free school meals are less likely to go on to achieve a qualification at Level 2 or Level 3 by the age of 19; they are less likely to take up an apprenticeship; and they are less likely to progress into higher education. In addition, people who are qualified to a lower level are less likely to participate in job-related training. Only 14 per cent of people qualified at Level 3 and below participate in job-related training in West Yorkshire, around half the prevalence of training among those who are qualified at Level 4 and above.[3]

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[3] Source: Annual Population Survey, January to December 2022. Indicator relates to participation in job-related training over a 13-week period.

4   CEIAG provision in the region

This section outlines the findings from a mapping exercise aimed at identifying the key providers of CEIAG across the West Yorkshire Combined Authority area. A comprehensive mapping of CEIAG provision is outside of the scope of this research, which instead focuses on understanding the range of provision across areas and across primary, secondary, and other CEIAG providers.

The mapping exercise, led as an online survey, aimed to understand the profile of providers in the region, the type of support they provide and to whom, and challenges they encounter in the provision and access of CEIAG. It was shared with stakeholders in local government, secondary and higher education, further education and training, specialist CEIAG services, and the third sector. The majority of respondents held managerial or directorial roles within their organisations. For some organisations, there were two responses from people holding different roles. The survey collected 44 responses, from a range of organisations across the region. A full list of the organisations is included in Appendix 2.

4.1   Profile of CEIAG providers

4.1.1   CEIAG organisations

Table 1 provides a summary of characteristics of CEIAG organisations that responded to the survey. Overall, the survey received 44 responses, and most survey questions offered respondents to select multiple options (eg one respondent could select multiple locations for where their organisation worked). Each row in the table outlines the number of times the response was selected.

Table 1: Characteristics of CEIAG organisations

Location	n =	Scope	n =
Leeds	27	Local	20
Wakefield	7	Local, regional and national	13
Calderdale	7	Local and regional	6
Bradford	6	Regional	2
Kirklees	4	National and regional	3
Beyond West Yorkshire	7		
Type of organisation	n =	**Type of CEIAG provider**	n =
Secondary or higher education	12	Primary provider	10
Further education	11	Secondary provider	21
Specialised CEIAG provider	5	Other provider	13
Employment support provider	4		

Local authority	3	Network affiliation	n =
Other provider	8	Part of a CEIAG network	35
		Not part of a CEIAG network	9

Size of the organisation	n=	Funding	n =
Micro (0-9 employees)	5	Publicly funded	27
Small (10-49)	6	Other funds	6
Medium (50-250)	10	Both	11
Large (over 250)	23		

Source: IES and WYCA CEIAG mapping survey, 2023

Respondents were most likely to work for local organisations, national organisations with regional and local branches, and regional organisations with local offices. Remaining respondents worked for regional, and national organisations. In terms of the geographical spread of providers, there was a high concentration in Leeds, with most of these working in Leeds alone and in no other area of the region. This was followed by Wakefield, Calderdale, Bradford, and Kirklees. However, many providers operating in the other local authorities, often had a presence across two or more areas within West Yorkshire, with only respondents in Wakefield reporting they worked in Wakefield alone.

In terms of the sector in which providers worked, the majority of respondents were spread between secondary and higher education and further education and training. This was followed by respondents from specialised CEIAG services, employment support, the third sector, and local authorities. There was then one respondent from the Youth Justice Service, one from a primary school, and one from a specialised post-16 institution. Most respondents worked in large organisations, with a minority in medium, small, and micro organisations. The vast majority of respondents were part of CEIAG networks or were linked to other organisations focused on CEIAG.

Only around a fifth of survey respondents classified their organisation as a primary provider of CEIAG, defined as organisations with CEIAG as their main function, with trained staff in careers guidance who provide careers services. These were specialised CEIAG providers, secondary or higher education, one local authority, and one employment support provider. Over half of respondents classified their organisation as a secondary provider of CEIAG, defined as organisations which have CEIAG as part of their function alongside other services and which have some trained staff. Over a quarter classified their organisation as an 'other' provider, defined as an organisation with CEIAG as a minor part of their function alongside other services, with largely untrained staff who signpost clients to specialised CEIAG services.

The majority of providers were publicly funded, followed by those which were funded both publicly and through other sources, and those funded through other sources alone. The Department for Education (DfE), the Adult Education Budget (AEB), the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), and local and combined authority funding were the most common sources of public funding. In terms of other funding, this came mostly from student/tuition fees, school funding, and grants. The majority of respondents classified their funding as either part of their organisation's core

funding, project specific funding, or provided as part of their annual funding cycle. Remaining respondents said funding was a mix of two or more of those or that they did not receive any specific funding.

4.1.2 CEIAG staff

Table 2 provides a summary of characteristics of CEIAG staff for the organisations that responded to the survey.

Table 2: Characteristics of CEIAG organisations

CEIAG qualification	n =	Level of qualification	n=
Staff have a CEIAG qualification	32	QCF Level 3	10
Staff do not have CEIAG qualification	10	QCF Level 4	17
Unsure	2	QCF Level 6	18
		QCF Level 7	14
		Don't know/unsure	3
Staff roles in relation to CEIAG	n =	**Access to formal learning/ training**	n =
CEIAG is the main part of the job	17	No	28
Offer CEIAG as part of wider role	12	Yes	16
Do it as part of leadership	5		
Multiple roles	9		

Source: IES and WYCA CEIAG mapping survey, 2023

The majority of respondents reported that either they or their colleagues in the organisations held a CEIAG specific qualification. Two respondents were unsure. Ten said no staff held CEIAG specific qualifications, and of these most identified as other providers (n = 6), followed by secondary providers (n = 2), and two primary providers. In terms of the qualification held by staff, most providers had a mix of staff qualified at different levels. This included QCF Level 3, Level 4, Level 6, and Level 7. Providers who had more highly qualified staff (QCF Level 6 and 7) were most often specialist CEIAG providers and secondary or higher education.

Around two fifths of respondents reported that CEIAG was the main part of either their or their colleagues' roles, followed by those who said it was part of a wider role, and those who said it was part of leadership responsibilities. Remaining respondents selected a combination of each, perhaps looking to reflect the diversity of the remit for CEIAG in their organisations.

When it came to accessing formal CEIAG training, the majority of respondents said neither they nor colleagues accessed this, with over a third saying that they did access training opportunities. Those who accessed training were primary or secondary providers in secondary and higher education (n = 6), further education and training (n = 4), specialised CEIAG services (n = 5), and employment support services (n = 2). Training and qualifications from the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), Careers Development Institute (CDI), Institute of Student Employers (ISE) were the most common forms of development opportunities.

4.2   Provision of CEIAG support

Table 3 provides a summary of characteristics of clients that respondents worked with, as well as the mode and type of CEIAG support provided, and barriers to support.

Table 3: Characteristics of CEIAG clients and support

Age	*n=*	Mode of support	*n =*
Under 16	16	Face to face	43
16-18	21	Online/web based	29
19-25	21	Over the phone	24
Over 25	15		
All ages	12	**Type of support**	*n =*
		CV and application support	41
Specific client groups	*n =*	Advice on learning/training opps	39
NEET	26	Access to labour market information	39
Ethnic Minority	22	Job search support	37
Disabled	19	Group Activities	36
Distant from labour market	19	One to one career guidance	35
Industry-specific	14	Employability programmes	35
Graduates	11	Skills assessment	27
Over 50's	9	Careers education programmes	26
Other	30	Interest guides	17
		Organisational career development	15
Barriers to provision/ access	*n =*	Psychometric assessments	10
Limited funding	21		
Client lack of awareness support available	20	**Referral and signposting**	*n =*
Clients with limited or no access to IT	17	Education providers	26
Limited transport/local accessibility	10	Online/ own search	23
Lack of (trained) staff	9	Word of mouth	22
Clients in remote location(s)	2	From Jobcentre	13
		From training providers	10

Source: IES and WYCA CEIAG mapping survey, 2023

4.2.1   Target groups of CEIAG support

Around two in five respondents worked with young people up to 25 years alone (n = 18), with a forth working with those aged under 16 or 16-18 alone (n = 11). Remaining respondents worked in services for all ages, with the exception of an adult learning provider which worked only with adults aged over 25. Overall the target groups that providers worked with in terms of ages were 16-18, 19-25, over 25, and under 16.

Providers generally had experience of working with disadvantaged groups including those who are not in education employment or training (NEET), ethnic minorities, disabled people, those distant from the labour market, over 50s. Many respondents also worked

with other disadvantaged groups (incl. care experienced, ex-offender, low socio-economic background, refugees).

A number of providers worked with specific industry sectors, including construction, health and social care, the digital and green economy, creative industries, and Priority and Growth Sectors for WYCA.

4.2.2 Types of CEIAG support

All respondents reported that their organisations provided in-person support. Alongside in-person support, some organisations also provided online support and telephone support. In terms of the type of CEIAG support provided. All providers offered a number of services, with the most common including: advice on learning and training opportunities; CV and application support; to labour market information; group activities; job search support; employability programmes; one to one career guidance; skills assessment; careers education programmes; interest guides; organisational career development; and psychometric assessments. The most common ways that clients learned about providers and the support they offered was through education providers, online or through their own search, through word of mouth, from the Jobcentre, and from training providers.

4.2.3 Challenges in CEIAG provision and access

Challenges identified by respondents in terms of provision of CEIAG were limited funding and lack of trained staff. In terms of challenges related to access, these were clients' lack of awareness of provision, clients with limited digital access, transport and accessibility, and lack of interest or engagement.
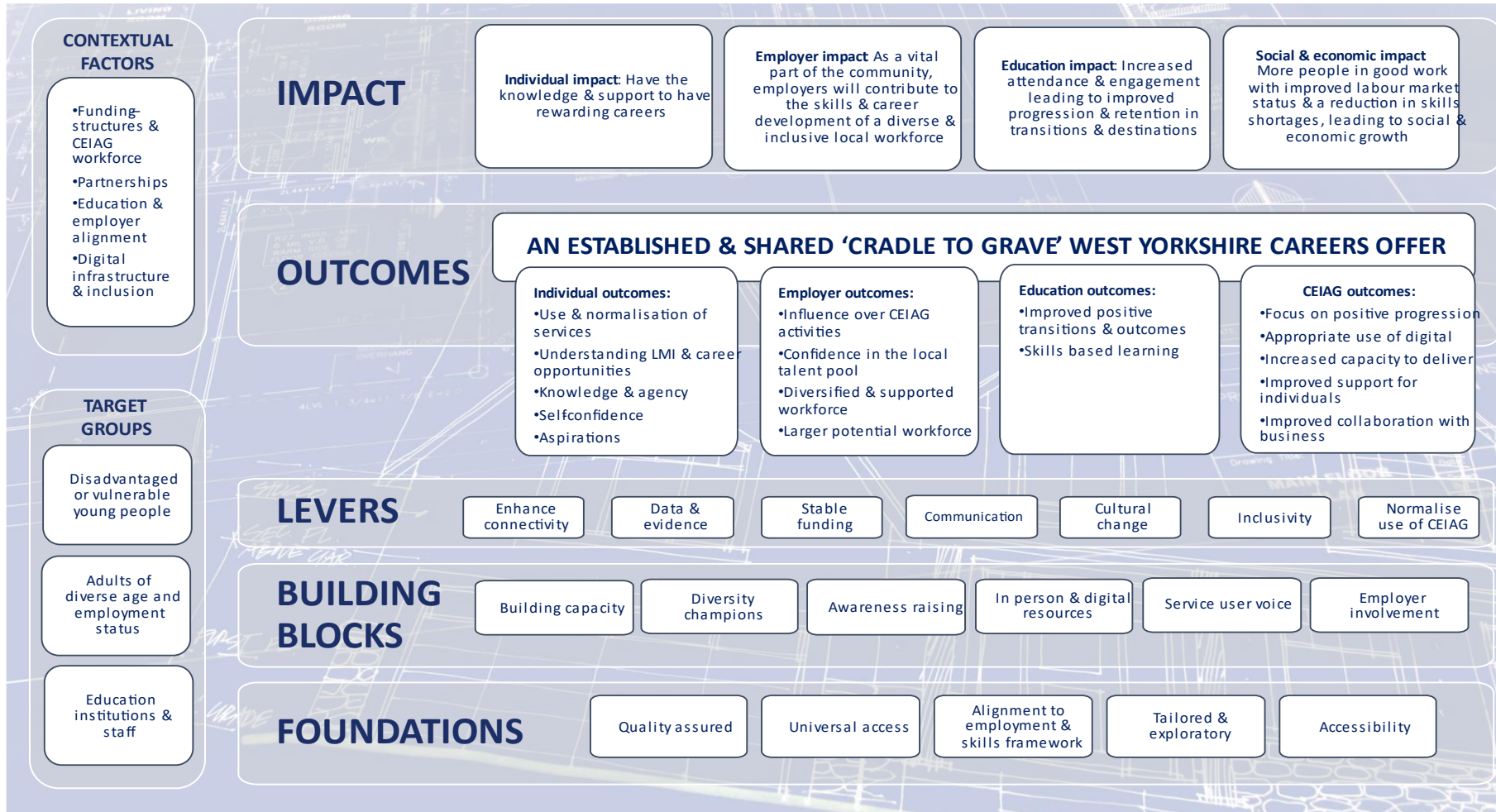
5   A vision for an All Age Careers Blueprint

This section presents the findings from the Theory of Change (ToC) workshop led with stakeholders across WYCA to develop a vision for the All Age Careers Blueprint. It includes the ToC diagram developed following the workshop, followed by a narrative addendum which provides further detail to the diagram.

5.1   All Age Careers Blueprint ToC

The diagram itself shows five levels of the step-by-step framework for how the All Age Careers Blueprint pathway can be understood. The ToC illustrated in figure 5.1 shows the outcomes for the Blueprint in relationship to the activities and the flow.

Figure 5.1 All Age Careers Blueprint Theory of Change

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS		
•Funding-structures & CEIAG workforce		
•Partnerships		
•Education & employer alignment		
•Digital infrastructure & inclusion		

IMPACT

Individual impact: Have the knowledge & support to have rewarding careers

Employer impact As a vital part of the community, employers will contribute to the skills & career development of a diverse & inclusive local workforce

Education impact: Increased attendance & engagement leading to improved progression & retention in transitions & destinations

Social & economic impact More people in good work with improved labour market status & a reduction in skills shortages, leading to social & economic growth

OUTCOMES

AN ESTABLISHED & SHARED 'CRADLE TO GRAVE' WEST YORKSHIRE CAREERS OFFER

Individual outcomes:
•Use & normalisation of services
•Understanding LMI & career opportunities
•Knowledge & agency
•Selfconfidence
•Aspirations

Employer outcomes:
•Influence over CEIAG activities
•Confidence in the local talent pool
•Diversified & supported workforce
•Larger potential workforce

Education outcomes:
•Improved positive transitions & outcomes
•Skills based learning

CEIAG outcomes:
•Focus on positive progression
•Appropriate use of digital
•Increased capacity to deliver
•Improved support for individuals
•Improved collaboration with business

TARGET GROUPS

Disadvantaged or vulnerable young people

Adults of diverse age and employment status

Education institutions & staff

LEVERS — Enhance connectivity · Data & evidence · Stable funding · Communication · Cultural change · Inclusivity · Normalise use of CEIAG

BUILDING BLOCKS — Building capacity · Diversity champions · Awareness raising · In person & digital resources · Service user voice · Employer involvement

FOUNDATIONS — Quality assured · Universal access · Alignment to employment & skills framework · Tailored & exploratory · Accessibility

Source: IES workshop of WYCA stakeholders, 2023

5.2   Target groups

At the bottom left corner, the ToC starts by describing the relevant target groups. It is important to make explicit the groups/types of users that can potentially access support once an All Age Careers Blueprint in put into place. A number of key target groups emerged for which tailored provision should be developed, including:

■ **Disadvantaged or vulnerable young people**, particularly those aged 14-16, those for whom the standard school experience has not been effective, and those requiring school liaison activity and pre-entry guidance. This includes young people who are, or are at risk of becoming, NEET or 'not known'; with English as a Second Language (ESL); who are care-experienced; with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and/or with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) plan; who have been in contact with the criminal justice system; and young people from low socio-economic backgrounds (eg Free School Meals, first-generation, etc.)

■ **Adults of diverse ages and employment status**, in particular those who require or currently access employment support and are considered disadvantaged in the labour market, such as those with few or no qualifications, not in work, in insecure work, or in low-quality and low-progression work, including those from deprived communities and ethnically diverse groups. It also includes adults with learning disabilities and older workers who might encounter added barriers to entering or re-entering work.

■ **Educational institutions and staff,** particularly those working to improve performance towards Gatsby Careers Benchmarks. This includes a focus on teachers and professionals to improve their guidance skills, and further embedding careers in the curriculum.

5.3   Foundations and building blocks

Stakeholders emphasised that high quality CEIAG support should avoid a scattergun approach and align with existing quality standards such as Gatsby Benchmarks, the Quality in Careers Standard, or the Matrix Standard, using clear criteria for high-quality career support, emphasising depth and quality over lip service. As a result, stakeholders identified a number of principles (foundations) which should guide the design of activities (building blocks) for the Blueprint, including:

■ **Accessibility**, prioritising delivery of provision 'close to home', especially for the most disadvantaged individuals

■ **Alignment with the ESF**, ensuring that careers support and activities align with the WYCA Employment and Skills Framework, to fulfil its ambitious goals for social and economic development

■ **Tailored and exploratory approaches**, ensuring that career guidance is easy to access and offers tailored support, which can help individuals understand their skills, preferences, and potential career pathways, and articulate their skills and experiences effectively

■ **Quality assurance**, implementing quality assurance across strategies

and activities, such as the Quality in Careers standard, to assess the effectiveness of career guidance, and maintain oversight of the quality of career guidance offered by providers

- **Universal access**, ensuring universality at the point of access, and providing consistent support across West Yorkshire. This includes removing eligibility criteria for access to career guidance, making it fully funded and accessible to all.

These principles can be adopted to develop a more coherent and coordinated CEIAG offer, providing impartial and comprehensive support which is accessible and easy to use. This involves addressing the current complexity in the system, characterised by different organisations and funding regimes, by identifying what works well and streamlining access to support. It also involves implementing a unified approach to CEIAG access, such as through providing a one-stop-shop model (eg with a single local number and website). Alongside this, there should be a focus on providing continuous support, establishing a comprehensive approach that goes beyond initial triage, ensuring individuals are referred to experts who can guide them effectively, with a focus on follow-up and next steps. This is particularly important at transition points, ensuring a strong focus on preventing individuals from falling through the gaps during critical transitions.

Alongside these foundations, areas of existing provision should receive enhanced focus. This includes strengthening employer involvement, engaging employers in discussions to determine inputs and align career guidance with industry needs, and

awareness raising efforts, through all age activities providing insights into different career pathways and qualifications at each stage of a person's career. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of including the voices of service users in the development of CEIAG, to ensure relevance and usability. Involving local providers and wider stakeholders is also key to designing support that meets local needs effectively. Digital resources and AI tools can support maximise the reach of career guidance and information. This should sit alongside considerations around digital accessibility and inclusivity.

A further area of focus involves working with employers to break down barriers, for more inclusive employment opportunities, open to a wide range of people, and supporting employers to understand the diverse range of skills different people bring. Promoting a more diverse workforce, is also important in the CEIAG sector. This includes challenging existing recruitment practices to foster a more inclusive CEIAG workforce. It could also include introducing champions, identifying individuals who have directly benefited from good advice and can serve as advocates for change, lending a real voice to the transformation process. This can also support efforts to build capacity and develop a stronger regional network of quality, independent careers advice to deliver support in both educational and adult settings.

5.4 Levers of change

Directly above the building blocks and leading on from them are the levers of change. These are of central importance

to a ToC as these are the conditions that are in place that make the model work. The levers of change identify the processes that enable activities to lead to outcomes and longer term impacts that the All Age Careers Blueprint aims to achieve. The levers identified in the ToC include:

- **Enhancing connectivity**, improving connectivity between organisations offering CEIAG and those delivering Level 3 and above educational qualifications. More generally, it involves increasing efforts to improve understanding of educational and career provision among individuals at all levels of education.

- **Leveraging data and evidence**, to gain insights into needs and measure the impact of changes. This includes establishing data-driven approaches to decision-making, to target provision effectively, and mapping progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks.

- **Ensuring consistent and stable funding** to support career guidance and education initiatives. This includes ensuring that funding for adults is not restricted and is accessible to a broad range of individuals.

- **Enhancing communication** and shared messages/language across organisations to foster collaboration, alongside promoting greater sharing of information and opportunities, among organisations, leading to cross-referrals. Also includes using different methods of communication and distributing resources to potential service users including in person and digital such as chatbots and text messaging.

- **Encouraging cultural change**, supporting employers to adopt more diverse workforce recruitment practices, fostering a cultural change in recruitment processes.

- **Focusing on inclusivity**, expanding efforts to work with people with Level 2 qualifications, shifting the focus from Level 3 and above, to ensure support for all.

- **Normalising the use of CEIAG** among all individuals, empowering people of all ages to make informed decisions about their next steps. This includes supporting people to be ambitious through the CEIAG activities.

5.5   Outcomes

The outcomes for the Blueprint follow on from the activities and mechanisms, and need to be in place ahead of any impact being achieved.

The primary outcome of creating this Blueprint will be **an established and shared 'cradle to grave' West Yorkshire careers offer, with equitable access to free, local, all age, and demographic-inclusive careers support.**

Furthermore, there are additional outcomes for different stakeholders in the careers Blueprint: CEIAG organisations and services, individual, employers and education institutions.

5.5.1 CEIAG organisations and services

Key outcomes for **CEIAG services** include:

- Increased focus on positive and sustained progression, whether through further education, higher education, or work

- Increased focus on digital skills and the digitisation of work in the delivery of CEIAG

- Increased resources and capacity among CEIAG advisors and staff to deliver high quality support

- Improved support for individuals who have been in the workforce for an extended period to adapt to changing industries and opportunities

- Improved collaboration with businesses to align career paths with the local economic landscape.

5.5.2 Individual

Key outcomes for **individuals** include:

- Increased and normalised use of CEIAG, particularly among those most in need

- Clearer and wide-ranging understanding of career pathways, aligning aspirations with sustainable opportunities

- Improved knowledge for informed decision-making, and improved skills and agency over career management and development

- Enhanced self-confidence and the ability to articulate skills and experiences

- Increased aspirations around jobs, careers, and educational pursuits.

5.5.3 Employers

Key outcomes for **employers** include:

- Increased involvement in experiential careers activities, informing the design and providing opportunities around these activities

- Improved attitudes and confidence to recruit from the local talent pool

- Improved practices around inclusive recruitment, that diversify the workforce and support individuals with different needs.

- Increased number of people with the skills and knowledge needed to enter and thrive in the labour market.

5.5.4 Education

Key outcomes for **education** include:

- Improved transition support, between school, further education, higher education, and work to maintain guidance connections

- A shift in focus from qualifications to a skills-based approach in the delivery of the curriculum

5.6   Impact

The impacts are also described across four fields: individual, employer, education, and social and economic.

5.6.1 Individual

Individuals, including young people and adults will have improved career awareness and self-belief, and broadened horizons. They will be equipped for high-skilled and higher-quality jobs, and have increased confidence and positivity about local opportunities. They will be able to achieve sustainable destinations, with consistency and variation in the career opportunities they choose, across

different geographical areas. Those with Level 2 qualifications will still be supported into accessible pathways towards rewarding careers, through recognition that not all careers need graduate-level education and that individual aspirations should guide career choices. Through access to lifelong career mobility opportunities, individuals will experience enhanced job security and have access to upskilling initiatives, leading to higher earnings and job satisfaction.

5.6.2 Employer

Employers will engage more in careers education programmes, offering work-based activities, such as work experiences and internships. As a result of increased awareness of the importance of investing in training, employers will make more use of the Apprenticeship Levy rather than viewing it as a tax. They will also place greater emphasis on social responsibility, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This will result from the enhanced perception of businesses being part of the community and taking responsibility for preparing the future workforce. As part of this, employers will recognise the benefits of a diverse workforce and inclusive recruitment practices. This will also promote a shift in mindset from a qualification-based approach to recruitment to a capability-based approach.

5.6.3 Education

Successful implementation of the Blueprint will lead to every educational institution in the region meeting its statutory duty and delivering universal CEIAG. It will also enable the recognition

of individual client needs across CEIAG provision, and positive impact of quality CEIAG support on student engagement, including attendance rates. This will lead to improved retention rates in post-16 and adult learning programmes and fewer individuals with qualifications below Level 2. Further expected impact, as a result of a more coherent CEIAG infrastructure, will be educational provision which is aligned with the needs of the economy for growth.

5.6.4 Social and economic

Wider social and economic outcomes resulting from improvements produced by the Blueprint, will include more people in good work, with improved labour market status, especially for disadvantaged groups. Better education to work pathways, as well as improved support for older workers and vulnerable groups, will encourage local people to stay in the area while also attracting others to the region. This will also enable greater workforce diversity, reflecting a more inclusive job market, and lead to more people in stable employment with jobs that align with their skills. Reduced skills shortages and hard-to-fill vacancies will foster social and economic growth.

5.7   Contextual factors

There are contextual factors, including internal and external factors that might come into play and influence the causal pathway for the effective realisation of the Blueprint. This is important to acknowledge as it can impact upon the delivery of the Blueprint and the potential to achieve outcomes and impact.

Within the workshops a range of enablers were highlighted by participants

as facilitating the successful realisation of the Blueprint strategy if put in place:

- Ongoing funding for the existing CEIAG infrastructure across the region, supporting efforts to build on existing models of good practice in the region

- Investment in workforce development, including paying the CEIAG workforce well and investing in their development

- Strengthened local and regional partnerships, and supporting the development of networks and relationships, coming together around a shared ambition

- Further alignment of education curricula to business needs

- Wider investment in digital infrastructure and digital inclusion

Workshop participants also identified a number of wider factors which may hinder the realisation of the Blueprint. These were generally themed around people-related challenges and systems change challenges.

The creation of a commitment to provide good quality careers provision to all residents within West Yorkshire no matter their age, will require new and deeper partnerships. All key stakeholders will need to commit to supporting the Blueprint move from a plan to delivery. The delivery of quality assured CEIAG will require a trained workforce to deliver this vision. Organisations and individuals need to be involved in the process so as to see the greater benefits of working together than in a siloed way. This will also require employers to commit to the plans, which may involve additional activities under corporate social responsibility banners,

changing recruitment and training practices, supporting evidence and data collection by being key partners in data collection. A challenge will be how to shift the mindset among some stakeholders towards an alignment of priorities and goals for the realisation of a shared vision.

The stakeholders taking part in the theory of change workshop are committed to change, this needs to be matched with centralised support from the Combined Authority. This could include consideration of how funding streams and eligibility criteria need to work better in conjunction with each other.

6   Interim conclusions and recommendations

The aim for this work, of which this interim report is the first output, it to have robust, practical recommendations and road map for the devolution of future funding powers that makes best use of the evidence gathered and the expertise of local stakeholders and the researchers. At this stage, the desk research and initial stakeholder consultations through the theory of change workshop, enable a set of initial, high-level recommendations to be drafted.

These will be used in the next phase of work and will be tested for feasibility, acceptance, cost, impact, and the security of the evidence justifying them. They will be debated and weighted through further stakeholder consultations, a public consultation and further work with the Combined Authority. Here, the evidence is summarized in themes and recommendations are linked to each theme.

6.1   Evidence and draft recommendations

CEIAG available where everyone can access it

The importance of accessible and comprehensive careers guidance is underscored by both academic research and our findings. Accessible CEIAG should cater to individuals of all ages and backgrounds, emphasizing awareness, locality, and multiple engagement avenues, including physical and digital platforms. This accessibility aligns with the concept of "locally rooted careers information and learning" (WYCA Employment and Skills Plan)

Recommendation 1: Enhancing Awareness and Access for All

Addressing awareness and access barriers for residents of all ages and groups is imperative. Residents should easily locate CEIAG support in their proximity, whether in person, via phone, or online. Initiatives should be aimed at making CEIAG services more visible and accessible to adult and disadvantaged populations.

Recommendation 2: Bridging the Digital Divide

Recognizing the challenges posed by digital poverty, it is essential to ensure that online CEIAG services do not exclude individuals lacking digital resources. A concerted effort is needed to provide inclusive access to digital resources, ensuring that digital barriers do not hinder individuals from benefiting from online CEIAG resources

Align strategic employment, education, skills and CEIG policy

The analysis of the labour market and supporting materials underscores the need to strategically align employment and skills policies with education strategies. CEIAG serves as a pivotal mechanism for achieving this alignment. WYCA has made significant progress in bringing relevant stakeholders together, which should be continued to realize the Blueprint's objectives. Furthermore aligning CEIAG with the needs of local businesses can lead to a more skilled workforce and contribute to regional economic development.

Recommendation 3: Sustaining Stakeholder Collaboration

Ongoing collaboration and information sharing among educational institutions, employers, local authorities, and CEIAG service providers is crucial. The development of the Blueprint is just the initial step in a broader initiative. Commitment to collaboration should be sustained, as this will be pivotal in realizing the Blueprint's objectives and ensuring a cohesive approach to CEIAG.

Recommendation 4: Cultivating education to business relations

Foster robust and mutually beneficial partnerships among educational institutions, employers, and CEIAG providers to collaboratively design and implement customized training and work experience programmes. These initiatives should be strategically tailored to the unique skill gaps identified within West Yorkshire's dynamic labour market.

Create ambitious minimum expectations for all ages

CEIAG delivered within educational settings should adhere to rigorous quality standards (ie Gatsby benchmarks as a minimum). Furthermore, the focus on CEIAG should commence at the primary school level, encompass tailored support for learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and draw from best practices found in university-level CEIAG. While standards for adult CEIAG exist (e.g., Quality in Careers Standard or Matrix Standard), they are not uniformly met across the region – there are currently no expectations for how many sessions an adult may be entitled to (as set out in the Gatsby Benchmarks).

Recommendation 4: Establishing Rigorous Minimum Standards

Efforts should be made to establish and enforce minimum standards for the delivery of CEIAG services, incorporating recognized benchmarks such as the Gatsby Benchmarks for school-age individuals and the Quality in Careers Standard for adults. These standards should be rigorous, ensuring that quality is maintained and that all individuals, regardless of age, receive comprehensive and high-quality CEIAG.

Ensure clear links between education achievements and work, through CEIAG

The demographic and labour market analysis shows that there is a need to raise attainment levels and rates, increase progression to higher education for those that are able, ensure that completion and achievement rates of apprenticeship improve for those that

want a vocational route. Good quality CEIG can promote engagement with learning and in turn improve the functioning of the education and training system. CEIG professionals and members of the public need access to good quality LMI that shows the link between skills and employment in occupations and sectors in the region.

> **Recommendation 5: Supporting Transitions and Skill Enhancement**
>
> CEIAG services should focus on supporting young people during educational transitions and offer diverse experiences and encounters that highlight the benefits of qualifications and their relevance to the world of work. Ongoing support should be provided to individuals as they enter the workforce, encouraging upskilling, reskilling, and reducing dropout rates.

Ensure equal access to CEIAG across the region

Disparities in access to CEIAG services exist, with Leeds displaying a higher concentration of provision compared to other areas. To address this imbalance, WYCA should consider a comprehensive review of the mapping evidence, taking into account funding and devolved powers. This will help ensure that CEIAG provision is available consistently across the entire region. While striving for a universal offer, particular attention should be given to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable populations to ensure they do not miss out or fall through the gaps.

> **Recommendation 6: Equitable Provision Across the Region**
>
> WYCA should conduct a thorough review of the mapping evidence in conjunction

with funding and devolution information. The aim is to establish comprehensive CEIAG provision across the entire region. Specialized provisions should target skills gaps, mismatches, and underutilization, ensuring that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals receive equitable support, thus promoting a more inclusive and balanced regional workforce.

Increase capacity and diversity in the CEIAG workforce

The research has highlighted disparities in the distribution of the workforce across WYCA, particularly across gender and ethnicity lines, as well as the training opportunities they access, alongside limited capacity within the specific CEIAG workforce for diversity as well as for training and development.

> **Recommendation 7: Diversifying and Building Capacity Within the CEIAG Workforce**
>
> By investing in the professional development and capacity-building of CEIAG professionals, WYCA can create a more inclusive, responsive, and diverse careers support ecosystem, which can help address wider labour market disparities. This initiative aligns with the overarching vision of the All Age Careers Blueprint, which aims to empower individuals from all backgrounds to enter and thrive in the world of work.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Labour market insight

One of the drivers of WYCA's poor qualification performance is the fact that young people are entering the labour market without achieving a Level 2 qualification, as shown in Figure 1. Young people in West Yorkshire are less likely to have achieved a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 than their national counterparts. The proportion is 77%, five points lower than the England average.

Two districts (Calderdale and Kirklees) are close to the national average but in Bradford only 72% achieve level 2 by the age of 19, seven points behind the national average, whilst Leeds and Wakefield are both around five points behind. This feeds through into a wider gap at level 3 – 55% have achieved level 3 by the age of 19, six points below the national average of 61%. Again, Calderdale and Kirklees perform close to the national average, but Bradford is nine points behind the average at 52%.

Figure 1: Proportion of young people achieving qualifications at level 2 and

level 3 equivalent by age 19 in 2021/22 (State sector)
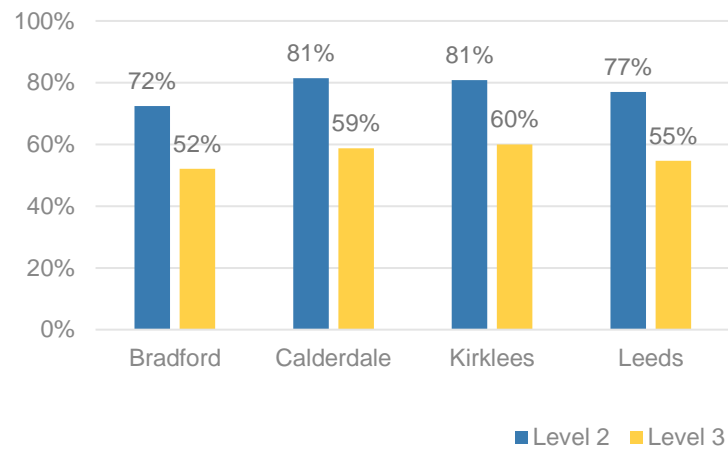
Focusing on attainment at level 2 and on the performance of young people who were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) while at school, the impact of disadvantage on attainment is highlighted in Figure 2. WYCA displays lower attainment for both categories, with a gap of three points in each case. There is a similar gap in WYCA and England between FSM and non non-FSM of 22 points, while Leeds displays a 28 point gap.

Figure 2: Progression rates to higher education by age 19 for state-funded pupils, 2021/22 by free school meal status
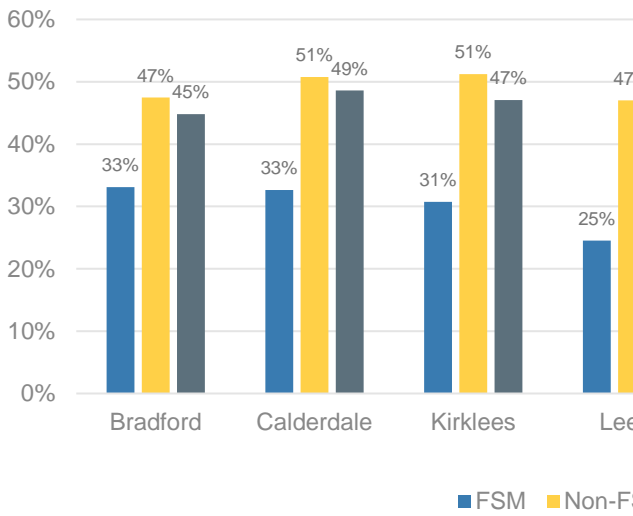
Source: Department for Education

When turning to further education, a trend evidenced in the data is that apprenticeships are highly segregated by sex and subject. There are marked differences in the subject profile of starts by sex. The largest areas in terms of volume of female starts are *Health, Public Services and Care*, *Business, Administration and Law* and *Retail and Commercial Enterprise*. Females accounted for 83% of total starts in *Health, public services and care* but females starts were in a small minority for *Construction* (7%), *Engineering and Manufacturing* (9%), whilst in *Information Technology* they accounted for just under one-third (31% up from 24% in 2019/20).

Figure 3: Apprenticeship starts by sex and subject, 2021/22, West Yorkshire
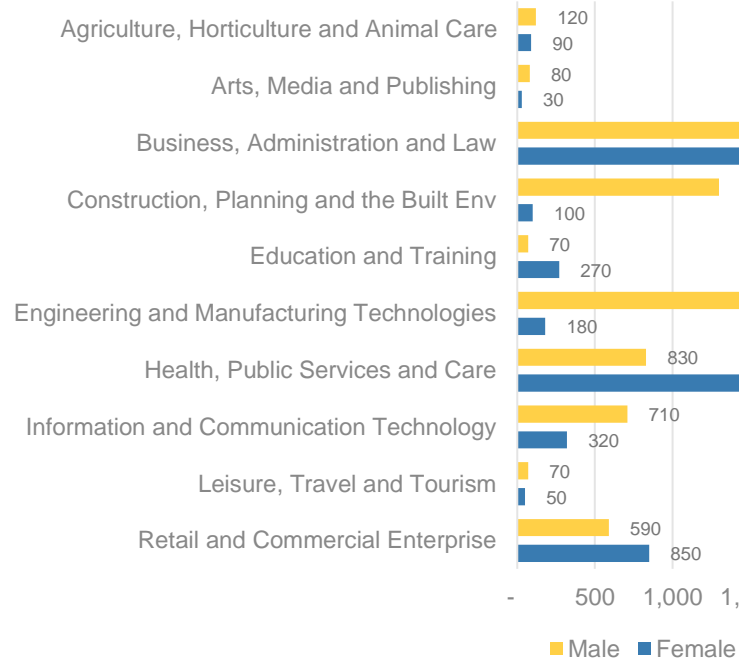
Source: Department for Education

There is also a high degree of segregation by ethnicity, with ethnic minority groups typically under-represented in West Yorkshire apprenticeships for young people, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Comparison of ethnic profile of apprenticeships and population for 16-24 year old, West Yorkshire
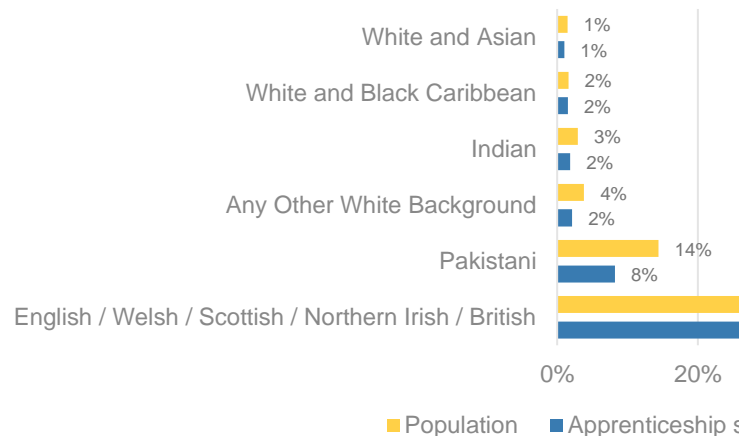
When it comes to professional roles, there is also a high segregation in terms of sex, with females making up the large majority of health and social care workforce, and the administrative and secretarial roles. Males are instead almost the totality of the workforce in construction, metal and electronic trades, transport, and agriculture. Generally, there is an under-representation of females in highly skilled professions, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Residents in employment by sex and occupation
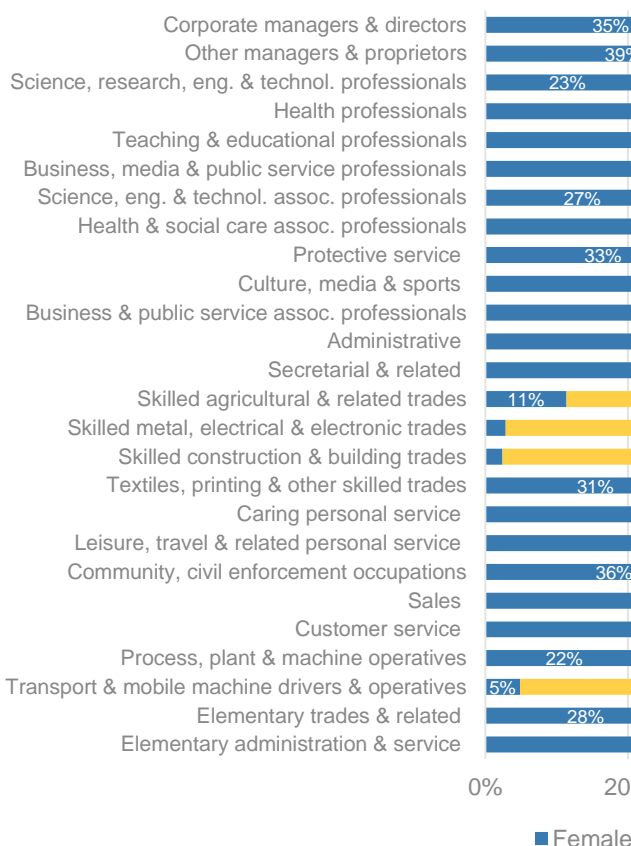
Occupational segregation also impacts ethnic minority groups, with residents from Pakistani ethnic groups making up over a fifth of the transport workforce in the region, and only two per cent of

those in culture, media and sports, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Residents in employment who are from a Pakistani ethnic group by occupation
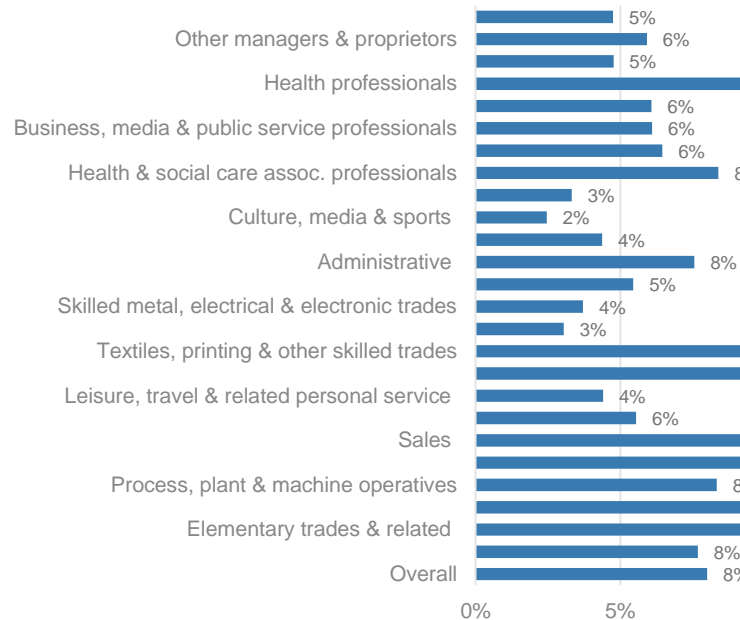
When turning to skills, shortages are highest in the construction and wholesale and retail sectors, as illustrated in Figure 7.
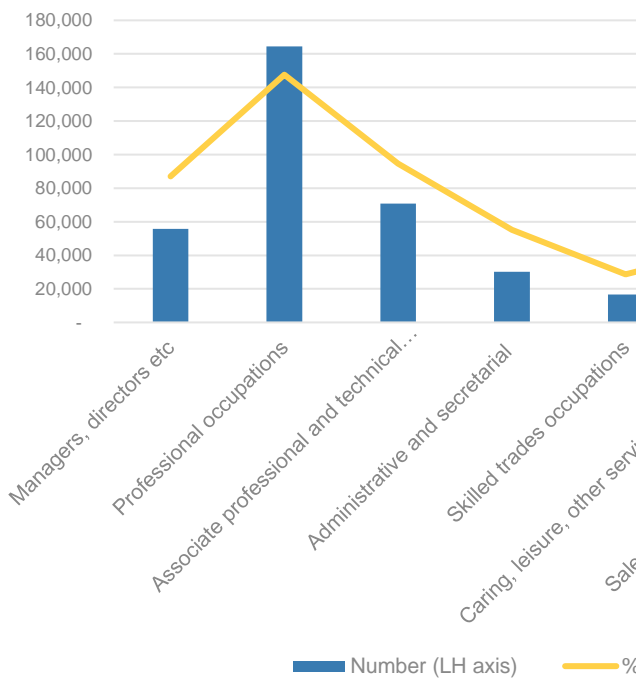
Figure 7: Skill shortage vacancies as % of total vacancies, West Yorkshire, 2022
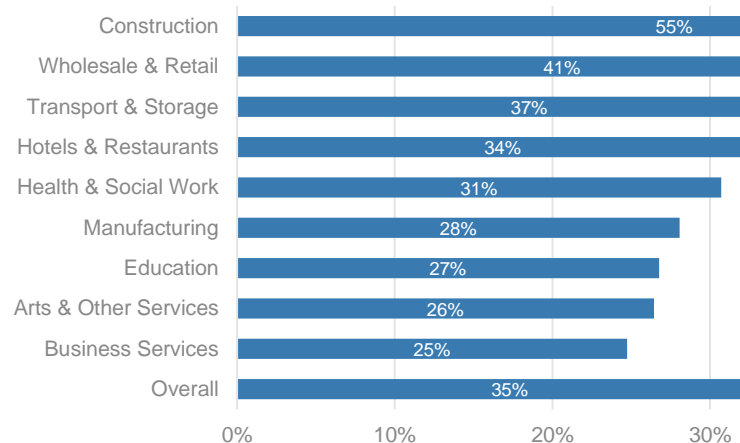
On the other hand, significant numbers of people with higher qualifications are employed in roles that do not require them, as illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Skill shortage vacancies as % of total vacancies, West Yorkshire, 2022


Source: Census 2021

There are also marked differences between the occupational profile of people in work and of unemployed and inactive people, as shown in Figure 9. This is even more marked when considering the profile of jobs growth in the labour market, which is largely concentrated in higher skilled occupations. Figure 9 looks at the employment profile of people who are in work versus occupational background of people who are unemployed and inactive (but want / are seeking a job)

The occupational background of both the unemployed and inactive is weighted

towards lower-skilled occupations, principally elementary but also sales and customer service in the case of the unemployed, plus caring roles (in the case of the inactive) and operative roles in the case of the unemployed. The proportion of unemployed and inactive people with a background in higher skilled management, professional and associate professional is in each case around half that of people in employment. This implies a mismatch between the skills and experience of the unemployed and the profile of demand in the labour market.

Figure 9: Occupational profile of the unemployed and inactive (based on last job), Yorkshire and the Humber
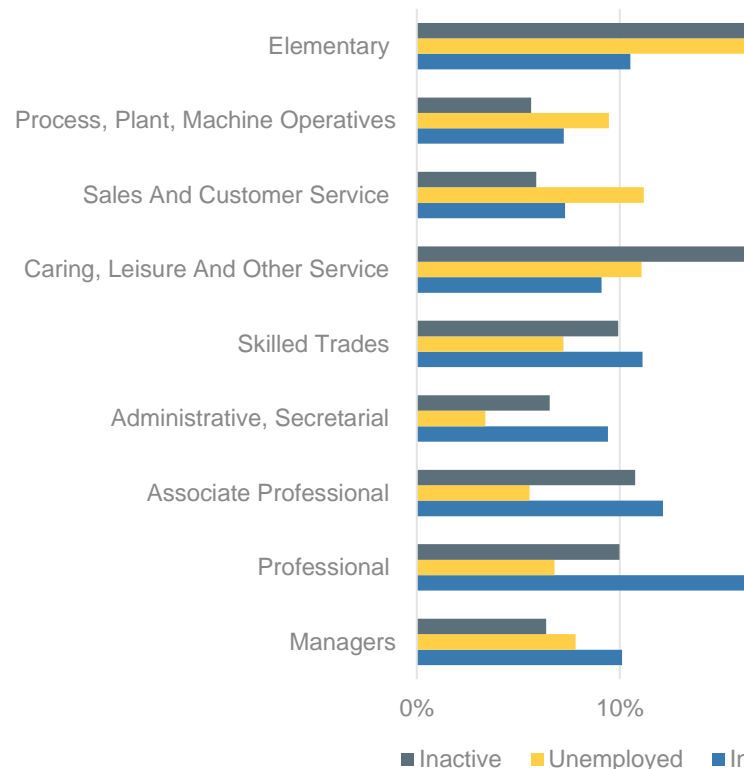

Source: Annual Population Survey

When focusing on attainment at level 2 and performance of young people who are eligible for FSM, the impact of disadvantage on attainment emerges, as shown in Figure 10. WYCA has lower

attainment for both categories compared with the national average and a 24 point gap between FSM and non-FSM. This data highlights the intersection between low attainment and deprivation.

Figure 10: Proportion of young people achieving qualifications at level 2 equivalent by age 19 in 2021/22 (State sector) by free school meal eligibility
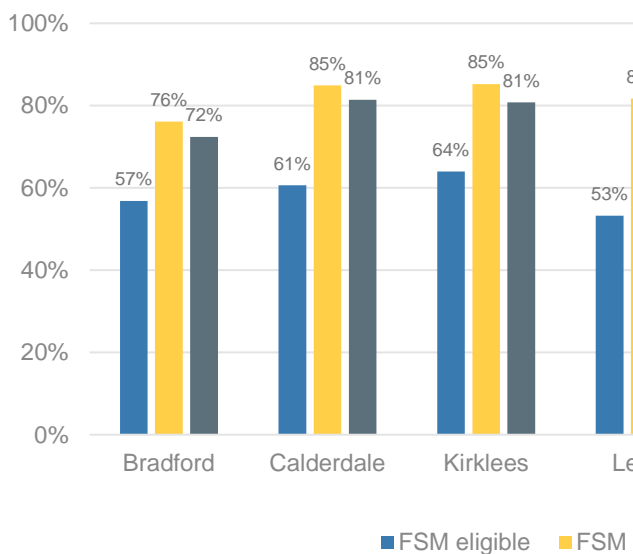
Source: Department for Education

Turning to job-related training, the incidence of job-related training is relatively low in WYCA as shown in Figure 11.
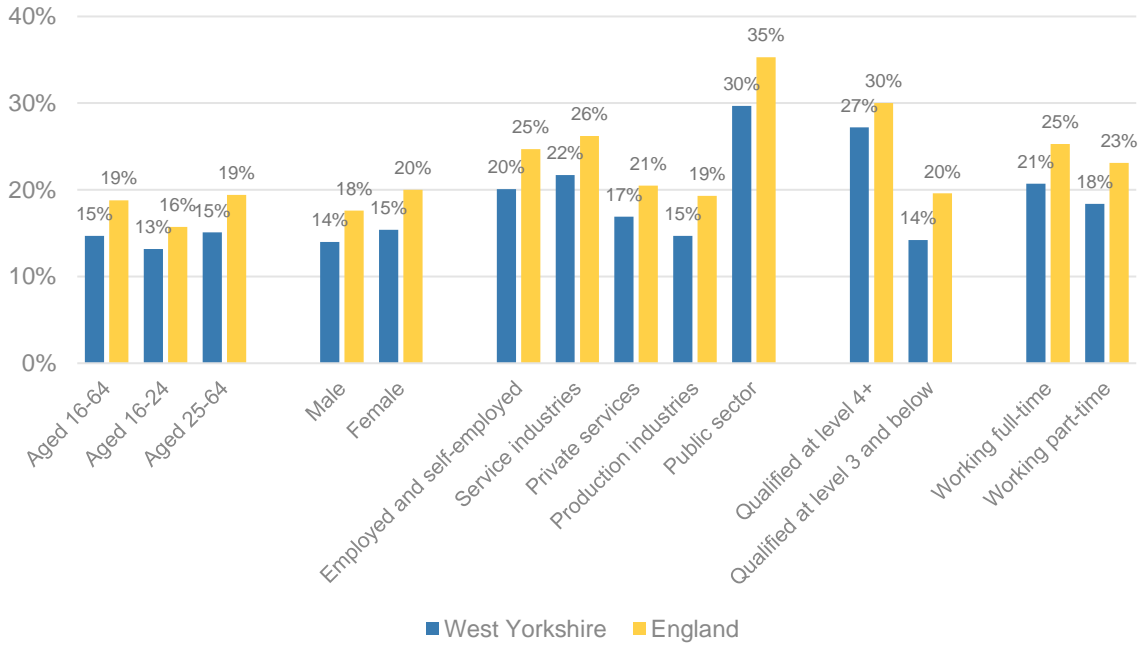
Figure 11: Proportion of people of working age (16-64) receiving job-related training in previous 13 weeks
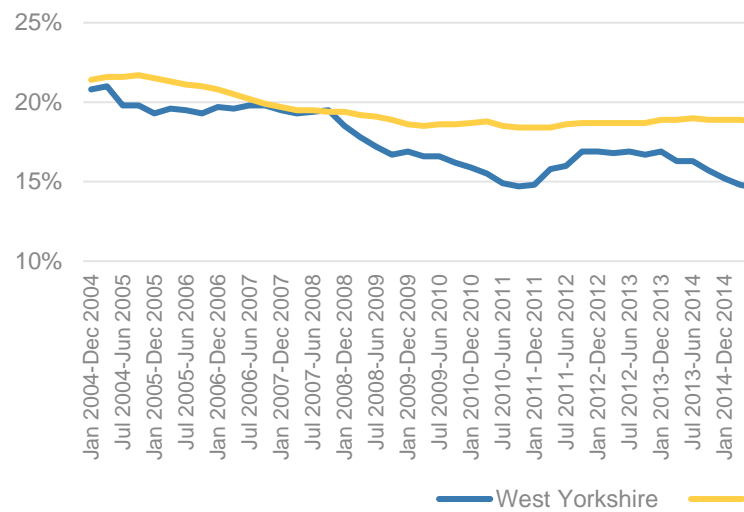
Source: Annual Population Survey

Alongside a low incidence of job-related training, groups traditionally facing disadvantage in the labour market are less likely to receive job-related training, and this is particularly the case for lower-qualified people (<Level 3), as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12: Proportion of people of working age (16-64) receiving job-related training in previous 13 weeks

Source: Annual Population Survey