

Employment and Skills Plan Policy Statement Template

Raising the Bar on High Level Skills

Vision / Aims & Objective

To drive innovation and productivity by ensuring that local employers are able to access employees with the high level skills that they need.

To contribute to inclusive growth by widening access to high level learning across all communities, opening up opportunities to disadvantaged groups and deprived neighbourhoods, as a means of supporting increased employability, earnings and social mobility.

To increase the proportion of the working age population with higher level qualifications and close the gap to the national average.

To ensure that the right pathways are available for young people to progress into higher level learning.

Evidence and rationale to support vision

We have a current deficit in high level skills and there is strong projected employment growth in high skilled occupations – high skills jobs are more resistant to automation and contribute to narrowing the productivity gap.

There are continuing skills shortages in higher level STEM areas, including engineering and digital, which we need to address by increasing the pipeline of relevant skills, including getting more women into STEM.

In some districts in our region there are low Higher Education participation rates, especially for disadvantaged groups and Black and Minority Ethnic groups, contributing to the pockets of stubborn deprivation and the stall in living standards.

There is a limited pipeline of higher and degree level apprenticeship opportunities and a relatively low completion rate for higher apprenticeships.

We have the largest higher education sector outside London, with a diverse body of institutions. Our Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) generally perform above the national average with regard to overall student satisfaction (captured through the National Student Survey) while the University of Leeds is ranked 13th (out of 131 institutions) by the Complete University Guide and the University of York is ranked 21st, based on entry standards, student satisfaction, research quality and graduate prospects.

How to achieve the vision

In order to deliver the Region's vision action is needed from the Combined Authority and our partners.

Current Action

We have developed and agreed Delivery Agreements with colleges which include aspirations around development of higher level skills which benefit the local economy.

Employment and Skills Plan Policy Statement Template

Our Enterprise Coordinator programme works with businesses and schools to encourage employer encounters and raise aspiration and awareness of higher level skills, including the Combined Authority's #Futuregoals campaign. Our approach includes targeting disadvantaged pupils with an enhanced enterprise, employability and careers offer.

We are supporting the development of infrastructure to offer degree apprenticeship across 12 occupational areas, with a view to supporting social mobility

Our digital skills campaign is increasing awareness of the importance of high level digital skills and the benefits they can bring to individuals thinking about a career change.

The Combined Authority, LEP and partners are delivering a range of ESIF funded programmes which contribute to delivering higher level skills, including:

- reBoot
- Skills Service
- Reach Higher

We are investing £79m of skills capital into new or refurbished FE facilities to ensure colleges can offer a high standard of education, especially in those subjects in demand by employers.

The Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership helps to attract businesses to the region which will create skilled jobs.

Future Action

To make a bigger difference change is needed.

The new government emphasis on technical education presents an opportunity for high level skills. We need to see choices available to all, and ensure that all have access to the right information to make informed choices.

We need to be able to work with partners to ensure provision is available that benefits the region. We are already doing this through the Delivery Agreements but with the right levers (e.g. being able to incentivise delivery of provision that directly addresses the region's needs) more could be done, including extending delivery agreements to include Higher Education Institutions.

Business already works with providers to develop specific provision outside of the mainstream qualifications but more could be done here. The region needs to enable SMEs to access tailored higher education provision by facilitating aggregation of demand – can this be facilitated by technology. It needs to be easier for business to shape higher education curriculum, especially in fast moving technical subjects.

Effective management and leadership is key to productivity, higher level apprenticeships are a vital aspect of this. As part of wider efforts to help companies make the most of the levy the Combined Authority, LEP and partners will look at how it can be used more effectively to develop management skills and improve productivity across the region.

The region needs to ensure key priorities such as Med-Tech have the high level skills they need, e.g. by clear educational/skills routes available in the region (apprenticeships, T levels). High level skills are directly related to innovation, having greater influence over local provision will help with ensuring both high level skills are available resulting in high levels of innovation in the region.

Employment and Skills Plan Policy Statement Template

As part of work on careers advice and through the Enterprise Coordinator programme greater links between qualifications and priority sectors/jobs in the region needs to be made. Links to the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) need to be strengthened. People need to understand how they can access advice and provision and get to higher levels, this can only be achieved with a fully integrated careers advice service which includes adults.

Key metrics and aspirations

34% of the working age population of the City Region are qualified at a higher level (level 4+), significantly lower than the national average of 38 per cent. By 2025 our aspiration is to see an increase to 40%, giving the prospect of eliminating this gap.

Through our Delivery Agreements, we aspire to increase the number of starts on higher level courses delivered by West Yorkshire further education colleges by around 1,400 per annum, or 39 per cent, by 2020.

A number of districts in the City Region (Barnsley, Wakefield and Leeds) have entry rates into HE that trail the national average. Meanwhile, all districts (with the exceptions of Kirklees and Bradford) have a gap between entry rates for disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils that exceeds the national average.

In 2016/17 there were 2,030 starts on higher and degree apprenticeships in the City Region. Take-up at this level has grown rapidly, albeit from a low base. Our aspiration is for continued rapid growth, with 7,000 starts by 2025.

Only 11 per cent of apprenticeship starts at the higher / degree level were in priority subjects in 2016/17. We need to increase this substantially as relevant standards come on stream in these subject areas; with an aspiration to increase the proportion to 25% by 2025.

Employers currently face problems in filling their vacancies for high skilled jobs, particularly in respect of digital professional and engineering professional roles, for example. One fifth (19%) of vacancies for high skilled occupations are difficult to fill due to a lack of candidates with the required skills. Hoped-for success in attracting further investment in sectors like digital could intensify skill shortages in the near future. However, in the longer-term (by 2025) our aspiration is to reduce the prevalence of shortage vacancies to 10 per cent.