

West Yorkshire Digital Skills Plan



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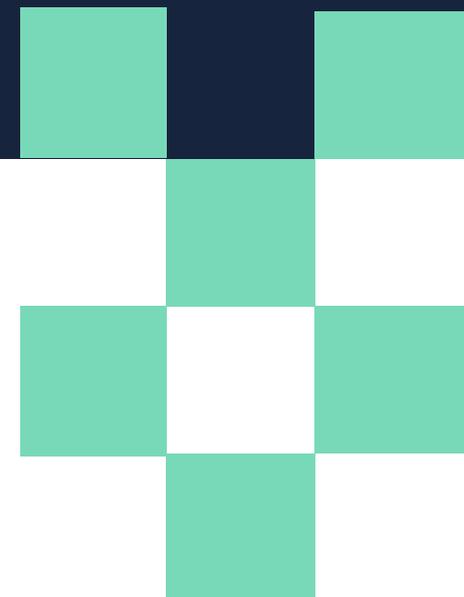
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Foreword from the Mayor

“Equipping the people of West Yorkshire with the right set of digital skills is one of my key priorities as Mayor. This Digital Skills Plan is our footprint for delivery to support everybody, from the residents who want to use digital to connect with their families, to the businesses looking to grow and innovate here, to the people looking for opportunities to work in our thriving tech sector.

Our Local Digital Skills Partnership has been a **positive force** since its inception. Through the partnership, we have created a network of digital experts who can deploy quickly to tackle digital skills challenges. These are national problems, but we know our communities and we know what works better for some compared to others. We are considering how every single intervention, policy and service we deliver, affects everyone in the region. This is the most effective way to use our resources to advance equality and **reduce inequality**.

In West Yorkshire, there has never been a more important time for us to focus on digital skills. We want to create more stories like Person A's, who used 100% Digital to stay out of prison and flee domestic violence. We want more stories like those who took part in Digital Skills Bootcamps who were hired by Dedalus. And we want more stories about prize-winning businesses who upskill their workforce and become more digitally-enabled.

And it will be easier to get there if we continue to localise our offer through further devolution of funding to support the digital economy.

Our new plan for digital skills contributes to two of the pledges I made when I became Mayor: prioritising skills and training to ensure everyone in West Yorkshire has the skills they need to secure work; and supporting local businesses and championing our regional economy. This is how we will build a fully inclusive and more prosperous West Yorkshire.”



Tracy Brabin
Mayor of West Yorkshire

“**This is how we will build a fully inclusive and more prosperous West Yorkshire.**”

Foreword from Councillor Lewis

“Our long-term prosperity depends on having people with the right skills to get back into work and be ready for new opportunities.

West Yorkshire has the fastest growing digital sector, outstripping the national pace of growth. This makes the development of digital skills a key focus to ensure we support the growth of this sector.

We will utilise the strength of regional partnerships to drive delivery through the excellent Higher Education Institutions, Further Education Providers and Independent Training Providers.

Evolution of digital skills to support all sectors will be key to developing their sustainability and enhanced productivity by ensuring that we have the training that employers need. We will reduce the number of low paid roles, increase the levels of qualifications across the region, support employers and the Third Sector to hire, and retain a diverse and inclusive workforce.

This Digital Skills Plan takes forward our ambitions set out in the Employment and Skills Framework, which was designed to promote skilled people, good jobs and strong businesses across West Yorkshire that recognised Digital Skills are a vital and cross-cutting theme throughout our Employment and Skills ambitions.”

“**West Yorkshire has the fastest growing digital sector.”**



Councillor James Lewis
Chair of the Employment
and Skills Committee

Foreword from the co-chairs



Mandy Ridyard
Finance Director of Produmax
and Chair of Space Hub Yorkshire

“The Digital Skills Plan must equip business leaders with the tools they need to transform their businesses into more productive, agile and prosperous organisations. This will allow businesses to attract the best and brightest talent, retain and retrain existing people, provide more diverse and inclusive workspaces, and allow businesses to be more flexible and interactive with their customers.

Small Medium Enterprises who struggle to access digital skills or have low digital engagement will be a focus, because encouraging them to transform their digital capabilities and upskill their staff will provide greater opportunities for these businesses to grow. I believe that providing support for employees to develop their digital skills will accelerate growth opportunities and future-proof businesses, paying dividends and increasing productivity for years to come.”



Bill Jones
Deputy CEO of Luminare
Education Group and Executive
Principal of Leeds City College

“Providing the future workforce with skills required for the workplace is key, not only for the development of learners, but for the economic output of the region as a whole. We must continue to strive to ensure all students have the digital skills they need to actively participate in modern society, and to progress to high-skilled employment outcomes. A key aspect of this is continuing to inspire students to engage with STEM learning. This, of course, includes a strong focus on inclusive provision and a diverse pool of learners.

More generally, we must make sure students are provided with holistic career provision, which focuses on giving students an awareness of the numerous opportunities for employment within our region.

As part of this, students must be given a greater awareness of how digital skills will shape the jobs of the future. It’s key that, within this, we engage with our vibrant SME community as the backbone of our regional economy, ensuring SME voices are prominent throughout skills provision.”

Why digital skills are important for West Yorkshire

Nationally, there is a mismatch between our reliance on digital technologies and our adoption of digital skills. The Digital Skills Plan tackles several key areas that will benefit from increased digital skills across the region:



Higher level skills for the tech sector

West Yorkshire has the fastest growing digital sector outside of London and is the UK's number one location for tech scale-ups. Increased digital skills will support this ecosystem.



Skills for all businesses

Increased digital skills will enable greater digital transformation across other key sectors, such as Manufacturing, Engineering, and Health. Increased digitisation will help them to compete and support their sustainability.



Workforce

Over 80% of all jobs in West Yorkshire currently require the minimum of basic digital skills.

Why Digital Skills are important for West Yorkshire

(continued)



Upskilling

With 80% of the 2030 workforce already in employment today, reskilling the existing workforce will be a major challenge between now and 2030.



Education

Fewer than 10% of pupils take a Key Stage 4 Computing qualification in West Yorkshire. Girls are far less likely than boys to study digital-related courses.



Inclusion

Socially, reducing the numbers of digitally excluded residents will have wider benefits on elements such as physical and mental health, regeneration and education.

Digital engagement data 2021

Much of our data on digital skills needs covers all of Yorkshire and Humber, rather than West Yorkshire. For Digital Engagement (people's levels of online activity), we have access to constituency-level data, which demonstrates that in 2021:

UK average	Yorkshire and Humber average	North Yorkshire	The Humber	South Yorkshire	West Yorkshire	Greater Manchester	West Midlands	London
61%	59%	57%	58%	60%	62%	62%	60%	70%

Digital Skills Plan: Vision

“Creating an inclusive society and a thriving economy through the growth of digital skills for all”

Our ambitions are:

1. Social digital inclusion

To support the growth of digital skills needed for social inclusion, addressing the ongoing challenge of accessibility and connectivity.

2. Workforce for the future

To support greater alignment between business and education to enable growth in digital skills and promotion of digital careers to deliver the workforce for the future, ready for the ‘jobs of the future’.

3. SME and third sector digital growth

To support SMEs and third sector to increase productivity through the growth of digital skills in their workforce, improving the resilience and sustainability of organisations.

4. Simplifying the digital offer

To demystify the regional provision of digital skills by understanding current provision and future needs, and ensuring provision is easy to access for all residents.

What we've been doing in digital skills since 2021*

*until Summer 2022. Source: West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Social digital inclusion

2,310 individuals enrolled on community or foundation ICT courses in 20/21

34,000 laptops or devices were donated to children or residents

Workforce for the future

938 individuals enrolled in Skills Connect Digital courses

8,103 students and teachers took part in virtual work experience

4,890 individuals enrolled or qualified from Computing or ICT HE/FE and apprenticeships

Commissioned 13 Skills Connect courses to be launched

23 schools were supported by 18 Enterprise Advisers in digital roles or sectors via Schools Partnership

SME and third sector

1,720 SMEs took part in digital events run by private partner organisations

671 SMEs received digital support through Business Support/ Skills for Growth

£728,000 levy pledged for digital apprenticeships in WY. 22 businesses were supported by the apprenticeship levy, re digital.

Simplifying the offer

15,422 views futuregoals.co.uk

Launched IBM SkillsBuild platform

Mayoral Combined Authority and partners' proposed headline interventions

Social digital inclusion

Build the capacity of community organisations to deliver digital skills and access to those who are digitally excluded

Develop programmes for those who can't access support elsewhere

Workforce for the future

Roll out a programme to help raise school-aged children's digital literacy

Attract/scale up specialist educational digital provision

SME and third sector digital growth

Offer digital support through Business Growth Service and its successor programme, and Digital Enterprise programmes

Ensure leadership and management training, including digital skills

Simplifying the digital offer

Launch a region-wide Digital Skills Campaign to inspire excitement in digital careers and increase uptake of digital skills provision

Seek further devolution of digital skills provision

Performance targets and scale of ambition

We aim to increase the numbers of residents with Essential Digital Skills for Life (75%) and Work (59%) to match the leading region's* 82% and 69%, respectively, by 2025. In line with the Equality Act (2010), diversity will be embedded throughout our targets.

Social digital inclusion



All are supported to engage in an increasingly digital society

We will demonstrate progress, and measure take-up by underrepresented groups, in: **

- % of digital engagement in West Yorkshire
- Enrolments on community learning ICT courses and foundation level (<level 2) ICT courses via FE (adults aged 19+)
- Numbers of underrepresented groups (e.g. prisoners) accessing digital skills
- Numbers of individuals supported by community organisations, with targets for EDI

* Greater London Authority

**The above monitoring scope is in addition to tracking regional statistics provided by external sources, e.g. DCMS and Lloyds Banking Group

Workforce for the future



Digital skills shortages and gaps are reduced

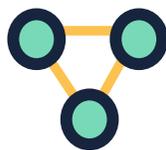
We will:

- Establish a digital employer skills survey as a barometer of skills gaps

And demonstrate progress, and measure take-up by underrepresented groups, in:

- Enrolments on ICT courses via FE (adults aged 19+) and as a percentage of total enrolments
- Qualifiers from computing courses from Higher Education Institutions based in West Yorkshire (including international students)
- Apprenticeship starts in ICT subject areas
- Ratio of vacancies to employment for West Yorkshire for digital occupations
- Numbers of individuals taking part in other digital training and employer events (bootcamps, work experience, internships)

SME and third sector



SMEs and the third sector value and invest in digital skills

We will demonstrate progress, and measure take-up by underrepresented groups, in:

- Number of businesses needing to improve their basic IT skills to meet business needs
- Retention and diversity of staff within digital sector/digital roles
- Numbers of SMEs and third sector organisations taking part in 'digital skills for business' programmes/bespoke events
- Number of SMEs and third sector organisations receiving digital support (funding, infrastructure)

Simplifying the offer



All residents can access digital careers guidance and skills training

We will demonstrate progress, and measure take-up by underrepresented groups, in:

- Numbers of individuals and organisations engaging with the inclusive Digital Skills Campaign. Campaigns will be targeted towards communities with lower engagement in digital skills offers.



West Yorkshire has the fastest growing digital sector outside London and is the UK's number one location for tech scale-ups. We will increase our residents' and businesses' digital skills to support this ecosystem.

Digital enables all of West Yorkshire's sectors, including our innovative and high-growth sectors. Increased digital skills will enable greater digital transformation across our other key sectors.



What are digital skills?

'Digital skills' is a term that can mean different things in different contexts – which can make talking about them confusing.

To ensure alignment with national government strategy, the West Yorkshire Digital Skills Plan uses the terminology from the [Essential Digital Skills Framework](#) :

- The 'Essential Digital Skills Framework' is the current baseline for digital skills that UK citizens need for work and everyday life.
- The Framework was established in 2018 through a consultation led by the Tech Partnership, Lloyds Bank and the Department for Education, involving over 350 cross-sector organisations.
- It updates the 2015 Basic Skills Framework by adding distinct skills statements for life and work, to demonstrate progression and enable measurement.
- Progress against the Framework is measured annually by the 'Essential Digital Skills Survey', which tracks year-on-year changes in digital skills, run by Lloyds Bank with Ipsos MORI.



The Digital Skills Plan is a vision of region-wide **transformation of lives and livelihoods** through digital skills

The Essential Digital Skills Framework is divided into the following four categories

Digitally excluded

Cannot do any of the *Seven foundation tasks* independently

Foundation level digital skills

Can perform all *Seven foundation tasks* independently

Essential digital skills for life

Can independently perform at least one task within each *Life Skills area*

Essential digital skills for work

Can independently perform at least one task within each *Work skills area*

Seven foundation tasks

- Use the different menu settings on a device to make it easier to use
- Find and open different applications/programmes on a device
- Update and change a password when prompted to do so
- Turn on a device and log in to any accounts/profiles
- Open an Internet browser to access websites
- Utilise the available controls on a device
- Connect a device to a Wi-Fi network

Life skills

- Understand the importance of communicating securely
- Set up an email account communicate with others digitally using email and other messaging apps
- Use word processing applications to create documents
- Share documents with others by attaching them to an email
- Communicate with friends and family using video tools
- Post messages, photographs, videos or blogs on social media platforms

Work skills

- Understand and conform with my organisation's IT and social media policies
- Comply with my organisation's security protocols when accessing my email or working remotely
- Communicate in an appropriate way for my organisation by using email, online and collaborative digital tools
- Use digital collaboration tools to meet with, share and collaborate with colleagues
- Use professional online networks and communities

The Digital Skills Plan also recognises two additional categories of digital skills

‘Essential Digital Skills for Work’ recognises a basic, generalist digital capability relevant to all work places. However, upskilling beyond the basics can help progress careers, support career changes, fill skills gaps across a variety of sectors, and support the growth of the Digital Sector in West Yorkshire.

Digital skills for the digital sector

The Digital Skills Plan will also reference the digital skills needed to ensure a supply of talent to meet the demands of the region’s thriving digital sector, which is now the largest outside London.

e.g. Programming, web and app development, data science, analytics, visualisation, SQL, Javascript, cloud computing, UI/UX design, etc.

Digital upskilling or re-skilling for any sector

The Digital Skills Plan will also recognise the need to enable people who have already achieved ‘essential digital skills for work’ to upskill further, or re-skill to support career progression and/or change in any sector. e.g. Manufacturing, Engineering, Health.

e.g. Using new digital technologies within business, digital marketing, content creation for social media, website optimisation, etc.



1 Social digital inclusion



The challenge

The social digital inclusion vision will cultivate strong pipelines of residents to engage with the further 3 workstreams. The close association between digital exclusion and other dimensions of inequality underpins an urgent social and economic need to act that aligns with Levelling Up. Delivering the right interventions to support those who are digitally excluded will have wider benefits on elements such as health, regeneration and education, thus requiring a collaborative, community-based approach and a resilient third sector.

Building trust and relationships with adult learners – across all ages – is vital where learners face considerable social and economic disadvantage, and multiple barriers to learning.

As of 2021, 4% of people in Yorkshire and Humber remain offline, despite the fact that West Yorkshire's full fibre and gigabit coverage are both above the national average.

25% of adult residents of Yorkshire and Humber don't have Essential Digital Skills for Life. 7% of these are digitally excluded, meaning they cannot complete a

single 'foundation' digital task such as turning on a device, using a mouse/keyboard, interacting with the home screen on a device, connecting to Wi-Fi, browsing the internet.

Only 59% of people in employment have Essential Digital Skills for Work. 9% of these do not have Foundation level skills, which include: using the email address book in their organisation to 'cc' in colleagues; working remotely using a virtual private network (VPN); using document formats such as PDFs; using video-conferencing products. This data is North East, North West and Yorkshire and Humber-wide.

Nationally, the biggest barrier to digital inclusion is lack of motivation, with 42% of people who are offline stating that 'Not interested, I see no need'. 37% of those offline state that they don't have the right equipment, and 36% say that it's too expensive to be online. 1.3 million non-users across the UK are worried about privacy and security.

As well as social and ethical reasons to add benefit to the community, there is a strong economic case to be made for digital inclusion. It has been estimated that if everyone in the UK was able to go online, it would add another £63 billion to the economy.



How we are already tackling the challenge

To access those who are digitally excluded, offline and online place-based support and community networks are integral. Tablet lending, Digital Champions Network, digital support across West Yorkshire's libraries and community networks that reach out to those most in need, supported by national charities such as Good Things Foundation.

CASE STUDY

100% Digital Leeds: Widely recognised as one of the leading digital inclusion programmes in the country, 100% Digital Leeds brings together the third sector, health and care, and council colleagues to design and deliver sustainable digital inclusion interventions that are embedded into existing services. 100% Digital Leeds was set up on the premise that the people most likely to be digitally excluded are those who have other challenges that make it more difficult for them to engage, such as disability, learning difficulties, poverty, homelessness, addiction, language barriers, long-term health conditions, social isolation, memory problems or other factors.

“ Person A has been in and out of prison for the majority of her adult life for numerous thefts from shops and was a sex worker prior to her most recent sentence. She is also fleeing domestic violence from another rough sleeper with whom she was previously in an abusive relationship. They were on a joint claim for Universal Credit which left Person A dependent on her partner and unable to break away from the abusive relationship. Having a smartphone has allowed Person A to make their own separate Universal Credit claim and the couple have now separated. Person A has a history of not attending probation meetings and getting recalled to prison as a result. Having a smartphone with connectivity has allowed her to stay in active contact with the Probation team and break that cycle.”

100% Digital recipient, via Leeds Housing Options

CASE STUDY

Libraries: There are 119 libraries in West Yorkshire, open 3,667 hours per week, with 600+ members of staff and volunteers, and almost 6 million visitors per year. The People's Network is the provision of free public access computers throughout the library networks and has had a massive impact for those who would not otherwise be able to get online, such as those who do not have skills/education, for whom the cost of equipment and network connections is preventative, or where there are cultural/language barriers.

An example of a local scheme is #digital121 – First Steps with Digital programme

A programme of First Steps with Digital was held at Seacroft Community Hub and Library in January 2022. The sessions are designed to: support digitally excluded learners to attain Foundation Level Digital Skills and reach towards Life Essential Digital Skills level; promote the use of Leeds Libraries online services and wider #digital121 support sessions.

“It means everything to be honest, because there's no other outlet at the moment for free internet usage.”

Kurt is currently homeless and uses the library computers to look for housing and to check his Universal Credit page. He's only got a basic phone at the moment, so he also enjoys using the library computers for entertainment and especially to listen to music.



CASE STUDY

Kirklees Digital Hubs: The Hubs provide free Wi-Fi and a space to access technology in a safe and covid-secure environment, as well as a range of free learning courses for anyone aged 19 or over, to suit people of all levels, from beginners to those with more advanced skills. Residents can also get online at home with help from a free device or data loan scheme for up to three months. It is envisaged that residents using the loan service will go on to further improve their digital skills and access other learning.



“

David was unemployed and the family were short of money and did not have access to a laptop, although they had internet access at home. David has some literacy boundaries and needed support to complete his CV and get some printed copies to hand out locally. David has always worked but had been made redundant just before Christmas and had been out of work for nine months when he approached the community centre.

The digital Hub has allowed a local resident who was made redundant to get an updated CV completed with support from staff. In addition, he was able to print off paper copies to hand out to local employers and to apply for jobs online with some initial IT support and training. He feels more included now he can actively job search without any help.

He has secured long term employment which in turn allows the family to be more financially resilient at a time when we anticipate a ‘cost of living’ crisis just around the corner, with utilities and petrol, for example, having gone up by 50% within twelve months.

David feels more confident moving forward and will now be looking at what other employment opportunities are available locally to get a better job. He has also learnt new IT skills which make him more independent when applying for jobs online.”

Kirklees Digital Hub recipient, via Chickenley Community Centre, written in March 2022



Action plan

Scale up the programmes that are delivering positive impact in communities, focusing on those that:

- Deliver digital skills and digital access to the digitally excluded in local settings.
- Deliver community-based interventions that increase confidence and motivation to start engaging with digital (such as cyber security training) as secondary learning.
- Provide more access to a sustainable programme of tablet and device lending and donations.
- Help disadvantaged communities out of data poverty through broadband or bespoke data packages.
- Offer people-based, on the ground, digital support to engage those who are digitally excluded or do not/cannot access services elsewhere (English-language learners, non-internet users) – this includes embedding digital support alongside other services.
- Signpost the next digital skills opportunity, such as 'Digital Entitlement' through the Adult Education Budget (AEB).*
- Work with employers, large and small, to support the digital inclusion agenda through Social Value and Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives.
- Support Third Sector and grassroots organisations to access funding and advice for digital offers that complement their primary services and connect them with other locally delivered Employment and Skills interventions.
- Build on the success of the devolved AEB by expanding the 'Digital Entitlement,' increasing the value of AEB Essential Digital Skills courses and lobbying for further devolution of digital skills.*

Priority actions



Build the capacity of community organisations across the region.



Empower the regional digital inclusion network through a hub and spoke model of advisers.

*See AEB case study in 'Simplifying the Offer' section

Impact

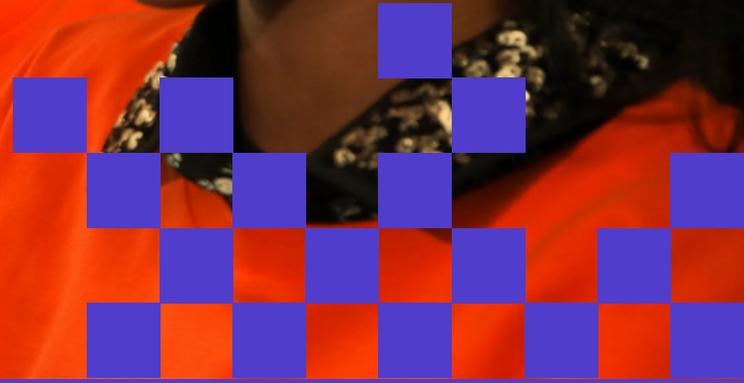
Everyone in society can gain the skills required in an increasingly digital-first world to help manage their finances, navigate the health system, apply for jobs, access housing and benefits, and enjoy leisure activities and mental wellbeing.

Through accessible and inclusive provision of digital skills training, no individual is left behind in our increasingly digital society.





2 Workforce
for the
future



The challenge

Over 80% of all jobs currently require the minimum of basic digital skills.

Digital professions are among the occupations with the highest prevalence of skills shortages vacancies. The number of people in digital roles is growing and the evidence shows that employers often cannot hire employees with the required skillset. Microsoft Office and Microsoft Excel are seen as some of the most in-demand skills at the present time for employers. Digital skills such as Social Media, CRM and Engineering Design are now required across a wide range of disciplines, permeating across the workforce. From April 2021 to March 2022, in West Yorkshire, Software Developer and ICT Support Specialist roles were the most in-demand digital occupations.

There is growing demand for specialist digital roles in the labour market. Online job postings for digital jobs was 50% higher in March 2022 than pre-pandemic. Employment in digital roles grew 6x faster than overall employment between 2011 and 2021. More than 40,000 people are employed in specialist digital roles in West Yorkshire, which are skills-

intensive and therefore well-paid (median salary of £40,800) roles such as software developers, web developers, telecoms engineers.

Yet, fewer than 10% of pupils take a Key Stage 4 Computing qualification in West Yorkshire. Around 60% of schools offer Computer Science GCSEs, covering 80% of pupils, but entries for computing-related qualifications at Key Stage 4 are low.

15% of young people in the UK who have smartphones have no access to laptop or desktops. Echoing the behaviour of the parents, children from a high socioeconomic status family use the internet more often and on a wider range of devices. There is clear alignment between what the parents say they want for their children and what their children aspire to themselves.

Girls are far less likely than boys to study digital-related courses, but apprenticeships are more diverse. Technology-related jobs are more appealing to younger children, young men and those with higher income levels .

Compared to girls in West Yorkshire, boys in West Yorkshire are:

2x as likely to study Maths at A-Level

5x as likely to study Physics at A-Level

12x as likely to study Computing at A-Level

Positively, there is an upward trend in Computer Science qualifiers from West Yorkshire's Higher Education Institutions. Computer Science has the highest retention rate of any subject in terms of graduates taking jobs in West Yorkshire 15 months after completing their subjects. These highly-trained graduates stay within the region to work in our well-paid digital sector. But only 15% of qualifiers from Computer Science from West Yorkshire institutions are female.

With 80 percent of the 2030 workforce already in employment today, reskilling the existing workforce will be a major challenge between now and 2030.

Workforce for the future

How we are already tackling the challenge

Large amounts of public and private provision is targeted at education institutions, to encourage, inspire and enable students to learn digital skills and consider careers that rely on digital skills. This includes the 'Teen Tech' initiative, IBM SkillsBuild, the FutureGoals platform and virtual work experience, the West Yorkshire Innovation Festival, the EY STEM app, STEM Learning ambassadors, Digital Skills Bootcamps, IBM P-TECH model, digital T-Level provision, Higher Technical Qualifications.

There is also some provision that works with businesses to encourage them to offer employment opportunities to those students/residents who have taken part in digital learning.

CASE STUDY

During covid lockdowns, FutureGoals produced an engaging series of videos, animations and challenges designed to replace the usual face-to-face work experience offer. Students were given challenges from West Yorkshire employers to make students aware of the key skills needed for each sector, including to:

- make students aware of the key skills needed for each sector, including digital
- explain desired qualifications for each role
- showcase some of the lesser known career opportunities available

CASE STUDY

Multiple courses at Wakefield College include Digital Skills for Life and Work, Digital User Skills in Microsoft Word and Excel, IT User Skills in Microsoft Office, T-Levels.

Born in Bradford and Connected Bradford form a powerful dataset of 30,000 Bradfordians that is changing the lives of our residents by increasing the health and educational outcomes of some of our most vulnerable children.

Digital Makers is the world's largest and richest study into adolescence. As part of this, the children will help the researchers to collect data (via VR games and other digital technologies) so that they're empowered to understand the data, increase their own digital literacy and understand the Human Rights issues surrounding the data and its protection.

The project uses its infrastructure (funded by Wellcome) to raise digital literacy and raise children's awareness of their data rights.

CASE STUDY

Digital Skills Bootcamps: Free, flexible courses for up to 16 weeks. Almost 2,000 West Yorkshire residents have applied to take part in these courses, using devolved funding, which were endorsed by local employers.

“I have always been interested in this subject, but after choosing GCSE Computing in high school, it became a passion of mine. It was a way for me to solve problems and challenge myself and the course at Leeds City College allows me to learn the basics of programming that I am then able to use when in the workplace... I applied for the apprenticeship programme in the spring of 2016...

I would encourage more girls to consider going into industries such as engineering, science and computing. With my job, there are lots of opportunities to develop, meet new people and travel the world. As there is such a high demand for female developers, it couldn't be a more exciting time to be part of this growing industry.”

Applied Computing student, Leeds City College

“The modules of the bootcamp were very relevant for what we do. They were all about how WordPress themes work, how you would go about adding plugins and we certainly see that the participants come in extremely knowledgeable of what they're going to be doing as opposed to coming in a bit cold footed.”

Leeds-based, micro-business who benefitted from the Software Testing digital Skills Bootcamp delivered by The Coder's Guild

“I had experience with JavaScript but I didn't have experience with all of the skills on the bootcamp. I learnt all the fundamentals that I needed to be able to use at industry level. They found me a company, Dedalus, and from there I was able to secure an interview. It's probably one of the best opportunities I've ever had in my life, especially with it being a transition from my current role.”

Former Coder's Guild Bootcamp graduate (2021), now Associate Service Delivery Coordinator at Dedalus Group

Workforce for the future

Action plan

All actions

Increase take-up of STEM learning, digital literacy and GCSE Computer Science – especially for girls and students from ethnic minorities – beyond GCSE level learning through academic and technical routes by:

- Developing greater work experience opportunities for digital skills roles, and digital roles in all sectors, especially for girls, to give insights into the soft skills and technical skills required in industry.
- Encouraging the participation in coding clubs, digital badges and extra curricular activities that promote the take-up of digital skills, especially to underrepresented groups (with additional support requirements for underrepresented groups).
- Supporting schools to fulfil their statutory duties to ensure pupils are aware of technical and academic routes to further learning, including digital apprenticeships, and to embed a digital strategy in all schools, e.g. initiatives such as the EY Stem Learning app.
- Promote, through engaging content, the various routes in and the opportunities that digital skills can lead to (including in non-digital sectors) to students and their parents through locally rooted careers inspiration such as www.futuregoals.co.uk, IBM Skills Build and the West Yorkshire Innovation Festival.
- Leverage the expertise of private provision (e.g. banks) and tailor free provision for West Yorkshire residents and businesses that is accessible and relevant to people's lives.
- Promote clear pathways for adult digital skills provision and funding routes, such as Skills Connect courses and apprenticeships, so that adults can upskill or reskill to advance their career (either for the digital or non-digital sector), especially targeting the over-50s to stay in work.

Priority actions

- ✓ **Engage digital employers in curriculum development, interactions with younger employees, careers fairs, careers talks and work experience, real-world digital challenges that align digital careers with young people's interests, T-Levels, internships, bootcamps and apprenticeships.**
- ✓ **Teachers across all subject areas develop an understanding of the career opportunities within digital, e.g. English teachers to understand routes into digital Marketing.**



Impact

The skills shortages and gaps are reduced in roles within the digital sector and in roles that require digital skills. Businesses are able to access local recruits with the skills they need, and residents can enter prosperous and progressive careers in West Yorkshire.



3 SME and
third sector
digital growth

The challenge

41% of the workforce in Yorkshire and Humber lack Essential Digital Skills for the workplace.

Yorkshire and Humber is the region with the lowest levels of high digital capability in England. Only 77% of SMEs within Y and H have high digital capability. The 23% of SMEs with low digital capability are less likely to: have Essential Digital Skills among their staff; offer their own website; use email to communicate with customers; use social media to interact with customers and suppliers; use government services; use Internet Banking; use online accounting software.

2020 data showed that almost a third of mid-sized organisations in Leeds City Region needed to improve their basic IT skills to meet business needs.

In Yorkshire and Humber, one quarter of businesses state that they don't have the knowledge and experience needed to make their business more digital.

38% of business leaders are not confident to lead their organisation in a digital world.

35% of businesses don't know or aren't sure where to access information about making their business more digital.

71% of businesses in West Yorkshire do not seek independent advice, either because they did not know where to go or they did not think they needed it. Of the 29% who do seek advice, 39% go to their accountant, 22% go to a bank, 16% go to their Local Authority, and 16% go to other businesses/peers.

In the third sector, it is estimated that there are ~12,000 registered and unregistered organisations and groups in West Yorkshire, which employ 29,700 full-time equivalent people. The total economic added value is calculated to be between £3.1bn and £4bn.



How we are already tackling the challenge

Much public and private provision is aimed at businesses (and particularly SMEs) to support their upskilling needs. This includes: Amazon Small Business Accelerator, Digital Boost, Clockwork City, Google Garage, Help to Grow: Digital, Digital Enterprise, Made Smarter. There is limited digital skills brokerage support for businesses.

CASE STUDY

Lloyds Bank Academy Business Hub: Free online on-demand learning and webinars on digital skills, to help businesses learn new skills and use technology to improve productivity, increase turnover and understand customers. Lloyds' annual national aim is to help 185,000 businesses become more productive and resilient.

CASE STUDY

Workforce Development Service. Bradford Council's Workforce Development Unit offers a range of development opportunities designed to improve the skills, competence and confidence of the workforce. These courses include a wide ICT offering aimed at the development needs of colleagues across the Council, but are also available to partner organisations and businesses external to the Council.

CASE STUDY

Skills for Growth is a free scheme that helps businesses to navigate the complex skills landscape. More than 600 businesses have been supported to access local talent and/or skills courses since Sep' 2020.

“Skills for Growth has been tremendously helpful in supporting our business growth. They introduced us to Leeds Beckett University who supported us to recruit a Marketing Assistant to target customers for our digital sales assistant products across the nation and beyond. As a result, we were nominated and won the prestigious Hermes Creative International Platinum Award in May 2021.”

Director of a small, digital business in Wakefield



CASE STUDY

Business Growth Service's successor programme. Business owners in West Yorkshire can connect with a Growth Manager with local expertise to find tailored solutions to support with their business growth, including digital adoption and skills.

CASE STUDY

Digital Enterprise is a business support programme which helps eligible, growth-focused businesses to scale up and achieve digital transformation. Alongside digital Growth and connectivity vouchers, Digital Enterprise's Digital Knowledge Exchange service offers free-to-attend workshops, masterclasses, conferences and mentoring. This helps local businesses acquire knowledge about digital technologies. Since September 2019, over 3000 businesses in Leeds City Region have registered their interest in Digital Enterprise.

CASE STUDY

West Yorkshire Local Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP)

The LDSP has worked broadly with key stakeholders to successfully grow the profile of digital skills and bring to life the importance of digital skills to the region and its economic recovery post-pandemic.

The importance of digital skills to all aspects of society is now truly recognised across the region, and the drive to ensure everyone has the digital skills needed is growing with the support of an increasing range of partners.

Action plan

All actions

- Influence leaders in SMEs and Third Sector organisations to embed digital skills and transformation as a key element of their business strategy, driving greater employment levels, and greater efficiency, productivity and growth, via business support and professional networks.
- Raise SME and Third Sector organisations' awareness of Essential Digital Skills for the Workplace interventions for employees, by working with services that offer skills diagnostics/support for employers.
- Support a regional programme for digital transformation which could include peer-to-peer, cross-sector support for SMEs, including micros and voluntary and community organisations, focused on underrepresented groups.
- Coordinate and promote schemes, including digital capital grants/funding, that support businesses to access digital skills and digital transformation and an inclusive workforce.
- Support small employers (and larger companies within the supply chains) who are indigenous or investing in the region to attract diverse talent and skills to thrive in West Yorkshire to strengthen the skills offer.
- Explore opportunities for subsidised digital training targeted at key sectors, to support priority actions.

Priority actions

- ✓ **Promote relevant digital skills programmes to SMEs and the Third Sector, including through our networks of diverse digital professionals.**
- ✓ **Showcase opportunities for existing workers to retrain by signposting businesses and individuals to existing upskilling provision.**



Impact

SMEs and the third sector value and invest in digital skills for their workforce to transform their businesses and build economic resilience and growth, and offer employment opportunities for West Yorkshire residents.



**Simplifying
the
digital
offer**

4

The challenge

The digital learning space is complex and fast-moving. There are many offers of courses with varying eligibility criteria, timeframes, costs, modes of study, support levels, and qualification levels. There is not a single portal that includes all provision from online only providers, state funded colleges and training organisations, universities, large employers in a range of sectors like finance, IT, business and engineering.

To demonstrate the saturation of the digital learning space, one UK-based digital learning provider increased their number of courses from 255 to 1,377 between 2015 and 2021.

Mapping provision is a long-term, ongoing task because new initiatives are added weekly. For this reason, this plan uses a case study, light mapping methodology to demonstrate current digital initiatives in West Yorkshire.

Those without digital skills are unclear on what training they need, and where and how to access appropriate learning. Yet, 2 in 3 of those without digital skills would like to improve their skills, if they knew what skills were needed and where they are available. And 64% of people say they would undertake digital skills training if they knew it would aid them with career progression.

Yet, more than a quarter (26%) of the working age population in West Yorkshire are qualified below Level 2 or hold no qualifications in 2019, compared with 21% nationally. There has been a significant fall in the take-up of digital Further Education courses by adults (25+) and community learning participants since 2018.

Self-taught methods of learning to use online services and develop digital skills are the most used, nationally. Self-taught methods are also perceived as the easiest way to develop digital skills. However, those with low or very low engagement with digital would be more likely to turn to their family and friends alongside self-taught/online methods to learn new digital skills.

Much of our data on digital skills needs covers all of Yorkshire and Humber, rather than granular West Yorkshire statistics. This is the geography used by many of the secondary evidence sources, e.g. the Department for Culture, Media and Sports and Lloyd's Bank.

How we are already tackling the challenge

Much public and private provision is aimed at businesses (and particularly SMEs) to support their upskilling needs. This includes: Amazon Small Business Accelerator, Digital Boost, Clockwork City, Google Digital Garage, Help to Grow: Digital, Digital Enterprise, Made Smarter. There is limited digital skills brokerage support for businesses.

CASE STUDY

The devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB) funds any adult over the age of 19 to undertake training. The AEB delivery partnership in WY offers a range of digital courses: from community-based, non-accredited digital access programmes, to courses for ICT practitioners.

Through the Digital Entitlement, the Essential Digital Skills qualification will be fully funded for all individuals aged 19 or older who are assessed at below Level 1.

CASE STUDY

Leeds' Digital Pathways and Destinations Steering Group

The group, which reports to the Leeds Learning Alliance, has identified that the digital workforce in Leeds is not representative of the demographic in the city. This steering group, which is made up of representatives from educational institutions, businesses, the voluntary sector and Leeds City Council, is working to improve the progression routes and pathways available for young people into digital-related careers.

CASE STUDY

Calderdale Council signposts regional/national schemes that have a role in Calderdale e.g. Barclays Digital Wings, FutureLearn, Google Digital Garage.

CASE STUDY

Barclays Digital Wings: An online learning tool designed to help users become more tech savvy and keep up-to-date on recent digital trends. It's accessible from anywhere, by anyone, from any device.

CASE STUDY

IBM SkillsBuild for Students and Educators exposes secondary school students (13-18) to the emerging career fields and skills needed for success in the future workforce. A starting point for career exploration, the platform offers free access to technical and professional courses.

Entry points

Social digital inclusion	I have no digital skills at all 'Digitally Excluded' – Need 'Foundation Skills'	I can't turn a device on or connect to the internet.	Pathways	Local, face to face community support programmes e.g. through libraries and voluntary/community sector organisations.
	I don't have the basic digital skills to be included in modern society Need 'Essential Digital Skills for Life'	I can turn on a device and connect to the internet, but I am not able to communicate, transact, problem solve, handle information and be safe online.		As above plus Adult Education Budget's Digital Entitlement and local educational institutions' provision.
Workforce for the future	I don't have the basic digital skills to thrive in the modern workplace Need 'Essential Digital Skills for Work'	I'm not able to use digital technology in the workplace to communicate with colleagues, transact, problem solve or handle information safely and securely	Pathways	As above plus IBM SkillsBuild; FutureGoals, private provision from banks, Employment West Yorkshire.
	I don't have the right digital skills to advance my career Need 'digital upskilling or reskilling for any sector'	Learning more advanced digital skills would enable me to be more productive, take on more responsibility and support me to advance in my career – or switch to a new industry all together.		As above plus SkillsConnect courses; traineeships, T-Levels, Apprenticeships.
	I don't have the digital skills to get a digital/tech role Need 'digital skills for the digital sector'	I would like to work in a digital/tech role (in the digital sector or beyond), but I can't apply the right technical skills. E.g. SQL, JavaScript, Cloud Computing, UI/UX Design, Fintech, web development.		As above plus Digital Skills Bootcamps, Higher Level Skills courses.
SME and third sector	I need to upskill my workforce/increase talent pipelines Need 'digital skills support for businesses'	We want to improve productivity and innovation, and access new digital technologies to transform our business operations.	Pathways	As above plus Skills for Business, Manufacturing Task Force, Made Smarter, Help to Grow: Digital.

Action plan

All actions

- Continue the convening, coordinating and influencing role of the Local Digital Skills Partnership of national, regional and local programmes, for local delivery.
- Monitor and measure the level of Essential Digital Skills in West Yorkshire.
- Undertake an audit of digital skills activity across the region and nationally, including Higher Level Skills for the tech sector.
- Ringfence a development fund for Higher Level Skills.
- Work with partners to ensure that digital interventions are meaningfully embedded into the design of all Employment and Skills programmes.
- Listen to the voice of businesses via ongoing engagement to examine the supply, demand and take-up of Higher Level Skills in this area and ensure that all provision is meeting the needs of businesses.
- Business Growth Service's successor programme to provide brokerage of all digital skills and transformation programmes.

Priority actions



Empower individuals to identify (either self-identify or through guidance) their digital learning needs and access provision.



Develop a simplified signposting toolkit/platform of digital skills support available for practitioners, which can be adapted for face-to-face interactions and in plain English, for individuals. (To encompass all levels from schools, colleges and universities, adult skills and employees.)



Impact

Residents understand how to access digital careers guidance and digital skills training for any stage of life or work.

All residents access this provision and develop their digital skills, for life and work.

What's next?

We will work closely with our Local Authority partners to prioritise and design programmes based on this plan. This will be critical to delivering the outcomes needed from each workstream. Digital is a key investment priority identified in our Investment Strategy that guides funding decisions and commissioning activities in West Yorkshire, for example through our devolved funding and future Shared Prosperity Fund activities.

We will explore how we can continue the legacy of the Local Digital Skills Partnership by broadening the scope as we refresh the wider Digital Framework. The Digital Framework sets out actions to address the following themes: 'digital technologies for all businesses', 'a strong digital sector to enable the rest', 'tech for good', 'world-class digital infrastructure', and 'digital skills for all'.

We will make sure that the actions in this plan have a true and measurable impact. At the first annual review of the Digital Skills Plan, based on the actions in the Simplifying the Digital Offer section, we will monitor our success, having created a baseline of data for West Yorkshire.

Continual training of our Adult Skills in the digital sector will be crucial for us to ensure that those entering and working within the digital sector have skills in line with the needs of the market. Working closely with the sector, we will undertake an analysis of the gaps in Higher Level Skills, identifying opportunities and exploring methods of filling the gaps.

All of the actions from each section of the plan will be reviewed comprehensively, ensuring that the work of each workstream has a coordinated effect on other workstreams, with Simplifying the Digital Offer looping back to Social digital Inclusion, to ensure that there is a cohesive pathway:

- From non-accredited Essential Digital Skills for Life for those who lack foundation skills
- To employer-endorsed, accredited or Essential Digital Skills for Work courses for those who want to upskill or reskill
- To technical digital courses which teach digital skills for the digital sector

Finally, we will continue to lobby for further devolution of the skills system, to connect the careers and skills in the sector and to ensure longevity and wide eligibility of programmes. Further devolution of the skills system would remove obstacles and eliminate short-term programmes, instead allowing us to react more quickly to industry needs for skills in our high-growth areas which have immediate skills needs, such as in the digital sector. We want West Yorkshire to be empowered to convene regionally and provide locally, for the best opportunities and outcomes for our residents and businesses.

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