

Thursday, 09 March 2023

## Skills Strategy Development

<b>Is the paper exempt from the press and public?</b>	No
<b>Reason why exempt:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Purpose of this report:</b>	Discussion
<b>Strategic Priority</b>	Education, Skills and Employability

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### Director Approving Submission of the Report:

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### Recommendations:

Members are invited to:

- Note the progress on development of the skills strategy.
- Discuss the issues highlighted in item 2.

### Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

19 January 2023

Education Skills and Employability Board

06 February 2023

## 1. Introduction

In January 2022 the Education, Skills and Employability Board commissioned the development of a strategy for education, skills and employability in South Yorkshire. The Board recommended that development of the strategy must take account of developments in the wider education, skills and employability landscape across South Yorkshire, in particular, the Local Skills Improvement Plan being led by the Chambers of Commerce. This paper seeks to update and engage the LEP Board on the development of the strategy.

## 2. The issue and connection to delivering on our economic objectives:

The emerging strategy seeks to address the long-term systemic skills problems that hold South Yorkshire residents back from fulfilling their potential. It will signal a change to a longer-term

approach, working in close partnership with our Local Authorities, colleges, training providers and other partners.

The emerging strategy is based on the following themes:

- Targeting School Readiness so that young children start school with the skills experiences and behaviours they need for success
- Providing educational enrichment to raise young people's aspiration and achievement
- Growing apprenticeships across South Yorkshire through a leadership role
- Helping adults improve their basic English, maths and digital skills.

Within these themes a set of priorities have been developed which include:

- Improving responsiveness to employer skills demands, building on the Skills Accelerator Trailblazer findings
- Adult skills activity funded through the Adult Education Budget
- Development of a clear skills offer focused on our Net Zero ambitions
- Strengthening our Community Learning offer to residents
- Developing a package of support for young people not in education, employment, or training.

### 3. What are we doing in South Yorkshire already – and what could we do?

South Yorkshire lags behind the national averages across all levels of formal education, impairing attainment and progression. The workforce in the region is typified by a lower qualification profile which matches the available jobs.

The Skills Strategy will build on the work of Local Authorities to provide a long-term vision, supported by our key partners, that supports our shared ambitions for economic growth, inclusion and net zero in line with employment opportunities.

### 4. Discussion points

KADA consultants were appointed to assist in the development, drafting and facilitation of the development of the strategy. A series of planned workshops targeting different aspects of the skills landscape in South Yorkshire have been undertaken with different stakeholders. These sessions have been themed around the journey through education, training and work to support in identifying key priorities and themes

Direction from the Mayoral manifesto, Local Skills Improvement Plan, the Regional Skills Advisory Board and Local Authority strategies along with direct engagement with students, learners and job seekers has helped to develop a broad range of perspectives to inform the development. This additional engagement, also supported by KADA, has been taking place in various forms such as 1-1's, small focus groups and using existing meetings or fora.

The discussions and the available evidence base have been developed into five themes:

- **A strong start for a secure future** – focusing on early years and through formal education, FE and HE and high-quality careers advice and guidance.

- **Lifelong learning: Creating a resilient and inclusive workforce/communities** – focusing on inclusion, learning support, upskilling/reskilling and developing a lifelong learning culture
- **Changing futures:** Preparing for the economy of tomorrow – focusing on key enablers of growth and resilience alignment to the changing economy and South Yorkshire main opportunities.
- **The place for innovation and enterprise** – focusing on linking in the innovation and enterprise agendas and joining up opportunities to promote and market South Yorkshire
- **A connected and responsive system** – focusing on making the ecosystem simpler and developing productive partnerships.

The intent of the Skills Strategy is to focus on producing a clear shared vision and set of priorities that drive action alongside an outcome framework and implementation plan.

In developing activity against each of the themes we are taking an approach that seeks to understand at a granular level the root cause and underlying issues that act as drivers of poor performance or barriers to delivering successful programmes.

LEP Board members are asked to help drive this approach; the following questions act as a prompt for discussion:

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- Do these five themes and associated priorities capture the big challenges being faced by employers and businesses?
- Are we clear about the challenges that are stopping organisations from investing in their workforce and the nature of the solutions that can help increase that investment?
- How do we strike the right balance of investment between these priorities – are we willing to accept trade-offs?
- Are we confident about the MCA and local partners having access to the necessary levers needed to make change on the scale and priorities we're looking for? Should the strategy be setting out proposals around securing new powers / resources from national government to support it's delivery – or engaging with the Government to test new ways of working through pilots / changes to national policy?
- How are organisations (public and private) adapting to reflect the changing demographics in the workforce?
- How are organisations promoting lifelong learning?

## 5. Next Steps

The initial consultation phase concluded at the end of December 2022, though some further activity is still scheduled. The focus is now on testing and developing the overall narrative, designing a set of measures of success, forming a draft implementation plan and outcome framework.

The emerging updated Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) will form an integral component part of the strategy; highlighting some of the present and future employer skills needs in the region. The timing of the final report will be dependant of the progress of the LSIP and integration of the research and recommendations. It is expected that a draft LSIP report will be complete by the end of March 2023 and a final version published by the end of May 2023. The Skills Strategy will build on this work and be delivered in the summer of 2023.

## 6. Risk Management

An equality Impact assessment has already been undertaken and presented to Members at the time of considering the Strategy.

As part of developing any strategy the MCA will need to have due regard to the need to :-

- i. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- ii. Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- iii. Foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

It is proposed that a full marketing and communications plan be developed by the Marketing and Communications Officer on receipt of the first draft of the strategy. Commencement of all marketing and communications activity to be aligned with expected delivery of final plan.

## 7. Financial and Legal Considerations

SYMCA has devolved adult education, skills and training functions. The development of a strategy will complement those functions. Many of the MCA's functions are exercised concurrently with the Constituent Councils. In the development of the strategy any expenditure will comply with the Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules and is supported through committed internal budget. The decision to adopt the final strategy will be a Key Decision.

### List of Appendices Included:

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