

Thursday, 18 May 2023

Skills Strategy Update

1. Introduction

In February 2022 the Education, Skills and Employability Board commissioned the development of a strategy for Education, Skills and Employability in South Yorkshire. The Board also acknowledged that development of the strategy must take account of developments in the wider education, skills and employability landscape that impact on delivery or that create new opportunities for residents and employers across South Yorkshire, in particular, the Local Skills Improvement Plan being led by the Chambers of Commerce.

This paper seeks to update LEP members on the development of the strategy following the presentation to the LEP Board in March 2023.

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

As a region across all levels of formal education we fall behind the national averages, blighting attainment and progression. Our workforce is characterised by a profile of low skills which matches the available jobs. We have to address the long-term systemic skills problems that hold South Yorkshire residents back from fulfilling their potential. That means a change in our methodology to a longer-term approach working in close partnership with our Local Authorities, colleges, training providers and other partners.

The evidence base of the strategy is the foundation to inform future planning, create opportunities and maximise the potential for employees, employers, and the economy. The evidence base started from a strong position, thanks to recent skills research, including more detailed labour market intelligence from the Skills Advisory Network and the Local Skills Improvement Plans, which provides further insight into the demand for skills from employers and the necessary steer for the region's current and future employment trends and skills demands.

A strategy for skills will allow us to set short- and longer-term priorities and actions in the context of the wider ambitions for economic growth as set out in the Strategic Economic Plan and our commitment to a stronger, greener and fairer future. The scope includes sector, geography, demographic, skill need and demand, and we are making this information accessible to those who need it.

Forecasting based on this labour market information provides a basis for determining the region's key business sectors that can contribute to meeting the economic challenge outlined in the SEP. For example:

- Understanding the future training demands is vital for industries/sectors which are identified as being able to provide the highest economic return for the region based on innovation.
- Identifying growth industries requiring additional capacity for employers of large numbers of people which can provide employment opportunities in the region.
- Sectors which are of important strategic value on a sub-regional basis.
- Inclusive growth and how the employer skills demand can be met by those with greatest need. The role of employers, training providers and 3rd Sector etc in levelling up, not just trickling down.

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

The work on the development of the Skills Strategy is supported by the Regional Skills Advisory Board. Feedback from the Board has identified that there is significant ongoing work in the skills space and related agendas that adds complexity to the development of a strategy. Therefore, a draft of the skills strategy is not yet available.

The process for producing the skills strategy has included a consultation phase consisting of a series of workshops targeting different aspects of the skills landscape in South Yorkshire has concluded. Including direction from the Mayoral manifesto, the Regional Skills Advisory Board and Local Authority strategies which has helped to develop a broad range of perspectives to inform the development.

The Local Skills Improvement Plan and the digital skills targeted phase 2 of the LSIP will form an integral component part of the strategy; highlighting some of the present and future employer skills needs in the region with the expected release of the final version by June 2023.

4. Next Steps

The focus is currently to consolidate the research and evidence base, which will not only direct the skills priorities of the region but become the cornerstone for growth plans and inform the future of further devolution activity such as Investment Zones within South Yorkshire