

Education Skills and Employability Board

15 June 2021

Skills Strategy Development – Road Map

Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Purpose of this report:	Policy Decision
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan?	No not a key decision

Director Approving Submission of the Report:

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Executive Summary:

This paper seeks members' support for proposals to commence the development of a Skills and Employability Strategy. It seeks agreement for the overall approach and proposed timeline that will enable development of a procurement specification to support the work. The paper also seeks members' feedback on emerging themes for the strategy to help us prioritise the forward plan of work.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?

Development of a skills strategy is an opportunity to secure better outcomes for all residents across South Yorkshire. Investment in education, skills and employability will be used to drive a change in the ambitions of our South Yorkshire residents, put employers at the heart of skills and employability system; contributing to inclusion, prosperity, and growth.

Recommendations:

That the Board consider and agree:

1. The overall approach to the work and skills strategy structure and the timeline proposed.
2. The proposed scope of the skills and employability strategy based on emerging priority themes.
3. The process to enable the commissioning of Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) research and consultant analysis of evidence base.

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

None

1. Background

- 1.1 Members have commissioned the development of a strategy for skills that would allow us to set short and longer term priorities to address these issues 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.
- 1.2 The skills strategy will support two significant plans published in 2020 by the Mayoral Combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnership; the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and the Renewal Action Plan (RAP). It will also link with and support the emerging Inclusion Plan which is in development to ensure alignment.
- 1.3 It is intended to create a living document; that has the voice and engagement of those who will be on the frontline of implementing the recommendations. This is hugely important in terms of a demand-led approach to strategic planning, alignment of regional policy and the subsequent investment in skills development. The overarching aim is to make sure that South Yorkshire can compete as a region of opportunity for both employers and the individuals who work and live here.
- 1.4 This paper sets out the footprint of the approach that we would like to take in the development of a strategy and the outline of the priorities within the agreed themes. Approval by the members will allow us to move this work into action.

2. Key Issues

2.1 Priorities and structure of strategy development

It is proposed that the skills strategy should comprise three documents, each providing standalone analysis / proposals but working together to explain how we propose to use the skills system to move from where we currently are to where we need to be, enabling residents to access more and better jobs in a more inclusive economy. The three key components are:

1. A solid **evidence base** which sets out the current skills position in South Yorkshire.
2. A robust **Labour Market Overview** providing the backdrop to current Labour Market Intelligence and signalling direction of travel for skills demand for the future.

3. A **skills strategy document** which sets out how we will use the mechanisms and levers of strategic influence, partnership working and funding to help residents improve their skills for greater inclusion and social mobility and to ensure they increasingly provide the supply of skills employers need.

2.2 **Delivering the Skills Strategy**

The process to develop the strategy will follow this footprint (Appendix A).

2.3 Stage 1. Evidence Base Analysis:

We have an existing body of current evidence and data such as the Local Skills Report completed by Warwick University, to commence the analysis and development of the strategy. However more South Yorkshire place-based analysis may be required to identify any differentials between localities within the region and help understand the issues to be addressed in partnership with local authorities. The Skills Advisory Network (SAN) will be invited to support this process and in identifying any areas where we need to drill below the level of data and evidence that we already have.

Timeframe is determined by procurement however an interim draft is expected by September 2021. It will help inform the emerging Inclusion Plan as attainment is a key part of the inclusion agenda, ensuring alignment to make sure that the documents reinforce each other.

Based on the agreed priority themes the strategy analysis and development will be brigaded under the following streams (Appendix B). Ultimately there are common factors and cross cutting issues to be recognised.

2.4 These priority streams will help ensure impact for all residents, where:

- all individuals from birth to old age, will have a greater awareness of the value of skills development and easier access to training available
- unemployed people will have a better chance to find a job through effective diagnosis of their skills needs and greater support to move into sustainable work
- low-skilled workers will have more chances to gain qualifications and more opportunities to develop their careers in the workplace
- small firms will have easier access to relevant training for their employees
- Management skills, competitiveness and productivity will improve
- employers will have more influence over skills delivery and greater incentives to invest in skills across all levels
- Upskilling and portable, economically valuable qualifications throughout the entire workforce will ensure improved labour supply

2.5 Stage 2: Labour Market Intelligence Research

The LMI will not only provide insight into current and future employment trends and skills demands but is an essential component of the Skills Strategy delivery, combined with existing data analysis. A specification is being completed to secure specialist consultancy for this work.

It is important to recognise that the LEP will have an important role in getting the right structure and content into the Overview and how we use it to provide context for our use of LMI. There is also an opportunity to work with the Local Skills Improvement Plan Trailblazer that the Chambers are jointly leading on.

(Department for Education has invited proposals from employer groups to submit bids to become trailblazers in finding ways to better articulate the skills needs of employers. Doncaster Chambers have submitted a proposal on 25th May 2021, having worked with the MCA and other partners to put a bid together.)

This stage of development will include consultation to challenge and question the research findings as well as support the direction of travel.

The process for will be consultative and inclusive, drawing in views from residents, business, and stakeholders across South Yorkshire.

- Shaped by boots-on-the-ground and how the strategy needs to work in practice.
- Recognising the legacy of the Covid 19 pandemic and planning for the future not only for the young but also the challenges faced by older residents.

2.6 Stage 3: Skills Strategy and Delivery Plan

We need to create a 'living' strategy that is relevant, reflects and responds to the life changes our residents undergo, to enable them to aspire and thrive. It is anticipated that initial consultations will commence towards late summer 2021.

2.7 The South Yorkshire Skills Strategy will be relevant and live if it has the needs and aspirations of those it is to support at the heart. So, the strategy will comprise of an overarching, aspirational document which incorporates a set of actions against each of the identified priority areas. This will then provide the basis for a delivery plan with short, medium- and long-term goals against which we can measure progress.

The delivery plan will include targets, timescales, actions and responsibilities, like pieces of a jigsaw comprising the complete landscape of activity across South Yorkshire. It will recognise where activity is currently or planned to take place in conjunction with the specific work to be undertaken to fulfil the aims of the strategy.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 Option 1

Recommend that members support the proposed structure for the strategy

3.2 Recommend that members support the proposed footprint for delivery of the strategy

3.3 **Option 1 Risks and Mitigations**

At this stage the risks will be minimal however a more comprehensive risk register will be required once the Skills Strategy is drafted.

Risk – Potential reputational risk if the Skills Strategy is not developed for the region.

Mitigation – Support existing provision and stakeholders to manage provision and risk

3.4 **Option 2**

Do nothing

3.5 Leave the region to manage skills and delivery on a local uncoordinated basis

3.6 **Option 2 Risks and Mitigations**

Risk - Patchy and disconnected training and skills acquisition across the region

Mitigation – Each locality to address any shortfall or need, on an individual basis as appropriate

4. **Consultation on Proposal**

4.1 The strategy will be consultative and inclusive involving structured stakeholder analysis, drawing in views from residents, business and stakeholders across South Yorkshire. The engagement will be at key stages of development to include consultation that will challenge and question the research findings as well as support the direction of travel.

4.2 Stakeholder analysis will be undertaken, and a communication plan developed in conjunction with Marketing and Communications Team. The consultation will involve in some cases creating focus groups as well as using existing assemblies

5. **Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 Commissioning this work will allow an initial draft report by September 2021, with the finalised delivery plan in the following months. A more detailed timetable will be produced once the Skills Strategy is drafted. This strategy is required in order to respond to the challenges of poor educational achievement, endemic low skills levels, poverty and worklessness - and the short-term impact of the pandemic. Failure to commission the work will result in delayed activity and interventions.

6. **Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice**

6.1 No additional funding will be required to fund the development of the strategy as above. All development will be undertaken by existing policy budgets for 2021/22, with no additional requirement for further funding at this time.

7. Legal Implications and Advice

- 7.1 The Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield Combined Authority (Functions and Amendment) Order 2020 provides the MCA with specific functions and powers relating to education, skills and training. Any procurement of consultants to undertake the LMI and other work will need to comply with the MCA's Procurement rules

8. Human Resources Implications and Advice

- 8.1 None at this stage

9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice

- 9.1 EIA completed with no implications identified at this stage. Will be revisited periodically during strategy development process.

10. Climate Change Implications and Advice

- 10.1 None at this stage. To be revisited when recommendations are developed

11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice

- 11.1 None at this stage

12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice.

- 12.1 None at this stage. Communications and Marketing are developing a plan to run the consultation exercise, they will work with the board to ensure the right stakeholders are engaged in the process

List of Appendices Included

- A Skills Strategy Footprint
- B Skills Strategy Priorities - Streams
- C Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers

None