

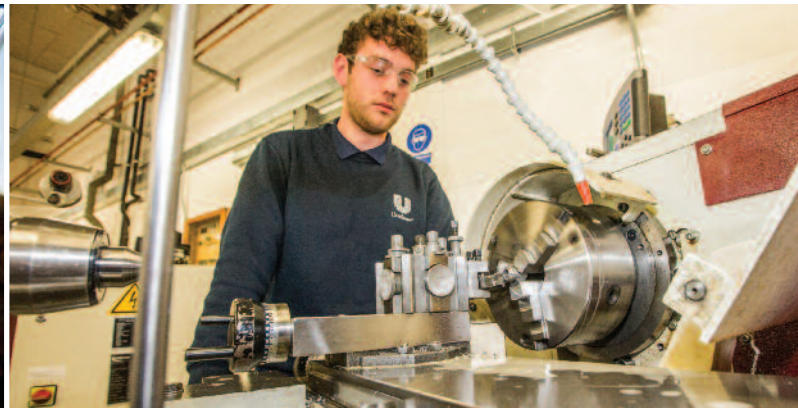


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# SKILLS & EDUCATION PLAN



**Cheshire and  
Warrington  
Local Enterprise  
Partnership**



**871 SQUARE MILES OF OPPORTUNITY**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### OUR AMBITION: TO PUT EMPLOYERS AT THE HEART OF INSPIRING AND INFORMING ALL OUR RESIDENTS ABOUT CAREER AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES AND MAKING THE CURRICULUM FIT FOR PURPOSE.

Cheshire and Warrington is a highly successful economy. Our economic output is greater than that of the core cities. We have world leading businesses, in world leading sectors such as AstraZenica, Bentley Motors, Unilever and Jungheinrich. However, challenges lie ahead. If we are to maintain productivity we need to replace our ageing highly skilled workforce (230,000 jobs by 2025) and address the deficit of up to 60,000 graduates and the challenge of 25% of workers earning below the living wage and many working on unstable low hours contracts.

We are losing 5,000 graduates each year and we have a clear mis-match between the skills employers need and the skills individuals choose to acquire. This is because not enough people get the information

they need to make informed decisions about the subjects to study and the careers to follow. This is particularly true for STEM and Digital skills.

This is the Skills and Education Plan that has been developed by the LEP's Employers' Skills and Education Board in consultation with local partners. The Skills and Education Plan sets out plans for working with businesses and skills and learning providers to ensure that our businesses have the skills they need to grow and individuals have the skills they need to progress. The Plan is a working document. It builds on the good practice that is already happening in Cheshire and Warrington but also proposes a more innovative approach that puts employers at the heart of the plan.

The Plan will evolve over time as we make progress and will be delivered in partnership with the local authorities and local training and education providers including delivery partners such as Warrington & Co and the Skills and Growth Company.

The LEP will also focus the use of its investment funds on our skills, learning and education priorities and identify opportunities for joint investments between the public, private and voluntary sectors. Skills and learning cannot be tackled in isolation. Individuals with the greatest challenges and further from the labour market need to be offered a holistic service as part of the inclusive growth and reform of public services programmes.

Much work has been undertaken with employers to address our skills, learning and education challenges and to integrate these outcomes with the other enablers of inclusive growth.


### In delivering a step change, we will:

- Ensure everyone in Cheshire and Warrington is fully informed about the career and progression opportunities open to them by putting employers at the heart of inspiring and communicating to young people, parents and teachers, other professionals that work with young people and individuals seeking work or to progress in work.
- Improve the overall quality of education, learning and skills provision, by supporting groups of employers in key sectors to work together with training, learning and education providers, local authorities and other partners to develop coherent packages of training, education and skills development with a focus initially on STEM and digital skills and the key sectors identified in the Strategic Economic Plan. This would include progression into work and into higher skilled jobs.
- Establish a communications hub to provide coherent messages about jobs, career pathways and progression opportunities and skills development, training and education offers across Cheshire and Warrington.


### In order to achieve this we will look to:-

- Reduce the duplication of effort across national initiatives ensuring a more coherent approach and a requirement for national programmes to work in partnership with Cheshire and Warrington.
- Secure a more flexible approach to the use of the Apprenticeship levy so that groups of employers working together can use the levy to support up-skilling, side-skilling and re-skilling current workers as well as supporting apprenticeships.
- Provide more support for work placements in SMEs.
- Support our approach to delivering an Institute of Technology initially focussed on delivering STEM and digital skills.
- Guarantee a replacement for the European Structural Fund programme that is flexible, of the same value and encourages co-investment by employers as well the public sector.
- Work with Cheshire and Warrington to devolve the 19+ Adult Education Budget.
- Appoint a Regional Schools Commissioner that is co-terminus with our sub-region.
- Undertake a structural review of student loans and the impact they are having on industries that cannot pay off or pay the salary and package level that lawyers and bankers are offering our students.

Some of these issues will require a conversation with government.

Grow our economy to at least  
**£50 billion** pa of Gross Value Added 

Create  
**120,000** jobs (net additional) 

Be **20%** more productive per resident than the UK average 

Build up to  
**127,000** new homes 

**...and create an economy that works for all**



## 1. ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF SKILLS

### Background to refresh of Strategic Economic Plan

The refreshed Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) sets out our ambition to drive the economy forward, capitalising on our unique strengths and opportunities. It is a strategy to support growth and economic development over the next 20 years, doubling the size of the economy and setting out the key economic, environmental and social strengths on which the growth will be founded.

The SEP is a high-level, 'living document' that will be updated to reflect and respond to key changes in national and local policy as and when they happen. The LEP is planning an early review of the SEP in 2018 and regular reviews after that.

The high-level SEP is underpinned by a robust evidence base and a series of more detailed plans for transport, skills and education, science and innovation, energy, digital, housing and place marketing.

This document is the skills and education plan. It has been informed by the robust evidence base and a range of discussions and consultations with employers, education, learning and training providers, local authorities and other key partners – listed at Annex A. It complements and supports the delivery of the Industrial Strategy, the Digital Strategy and the Post-16 Skills Plan. It also complements the work of Cheshire and Warrington's "Into Work Board" which addresses the challenges of individuals with complex barriers to work.

### Headlines and key messages

The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) confirms the revised growth ambition shared across the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region: to grow our economy's GVA to at least £50 billion per annum by 2040. Our ambition is founded on the bedrock of being consistently the most successful economy in the North, supported by a vibrant private sector business base and public-sector partners that are

proactive, business-friendly and which desire to create great places for their residents and businesses to live, work, invest and relax.

During the refresh of the SEP the following issues that are particularly relevant to our skills and education plan emerged:

- *We have a mismatch between the skills employers need and the skills individuals choose to acquire. This is because not enough people get the information they need to make informed decisions about the subjects they choose to study and the careers they follow. This is particularly true for STEM and Digital skills.*
- *There are demographic challenges ahead. Our population growth is well below the UK average and we have a markedly smaller proportion of 20-35year olds than other areas. As a result, our workforce is ageing and pressure on public services is increasing;*

- We have a highly skilled resident workforce, though much of these skills reside in older workers. Skills levels in younger age groups are lower than in other areas and we face problems attracting and retaining graduates;
- Whilst we have relatively low unemployment, we have a large number of adults who are economically inactive, who, with the right support, could enter and sustain employment.
- Cheshire and Warrington is a highly productive manufacturing economy which is a net importer of employees with a net 126,000 people commuting into Cheshire and Warrington every day. Our area is responsible for around a quarter of manufacturing output in the North West, by value, and manufacturing as a share of our overall economy is around 2½ times greater than the national average;
- As well as manufacturing and engineering, we have strengths in Chemicals, Life Sciences (including pharmaceuticals), Energy and Environment, Finance and Business Services and Logistics and Distribution. Growth potential has also been identified for the Agritech and Digital sectors;
- Our economic activity is not confined to towns and cities – the rural area is home to a wide range of businesses beyond 'traditional' land-based activities;
- Creating an excellent 'Quality of Place' is an essential component underpinning economic growth. High quality urban, suburban and rural places, housing, leisure and retail offer and visitor economy are key to attracting and retaining the skilled workers and their families who we need to support our businesses. We need to ensure that young people and individuals looking for work in these places are aware of the career and progression opportunities that are available to them locally as well as more widely.



The SEP is intended to be a high-level, strategic road map to achieving our growth ambition. The strategy has been designed to be flexible and provide a broad framework within which different areas and groups can align their activities. The SEP reflects the importance of inclusive growth and the need to improve public services through the Public-Sector Reform agenda in Cheshire and Warrington.

## 2. INTRODUCTION TO SKILLS AND EDUCATION

### Why are skills and education important to Cheshire and Warrington?

Skills, learning and education are key drivers of the economy. They enable businesses to grow and innovate and individuals to get jobs and progress. A strong and resilient talent pool is essential to the successful delivery of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) in Cheshire and Warrington. It will help to deliver inclusive growth.

In Cheshire and Warrington, a highly skilled and resilient workforce will:

- help to retain and grow the outstanding businesses that we already have
- improve productivity
- attract new investors
- attract more people and businesses into the area
- enable our residents to find good quality jobs and progress
- ensure we will remain competitive in new global markets

### Skills and Education Challenges

#### The number of initiatives and the quality of training and education provision

In Cheshire and Warrington, we have lots of activity and plenty of good practice but many businesses, educators and individual learners are confused by all the initiatives and the lack of clear information and coherent messages. They complain that the landscape is confusing and not enough people get the information they need to make informed decisions about the subjects they chose to study and the careers they follow – in Cheshire and Warrington we have over 180 business support programmes and around 200 training providers. **There is so much noise, key messages are not getting through. We need to work smarter and develop a more coherent and co-ordinated approach.**

The quality of primary and secondary schools in Cheshire and Warrington is generally very good although we still have some schools that need further improvement. We also have University Technical Colleges in Warrington and Crewe, two outstanding sixth form colleges and good general further education colleges with outstanding features. Reaseheath College is a leading regional specialist land-based college and Chester University has strategic links with the Universities of Lancaster and Liverpool. South Cheshire College, Priestley College and Beaumont Collegiate Academy have Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) assured status. In addition, Beaumont Collegiate Academy runs a Coder Dojo programming club and has a FAB Lab. We also have a local outstanding private training provider. However not all training and education provision in Cheshire and Warrington is good or outstanding.



### What people in Cheshire and Warrington are choosing to study

In Cheshire and Warrington, we have lots of good practice where businesses are inspiring and working with young people - but we need to do more. Too many people in Cheshire and Warrington are unaware of job and progression opportunities and are making poorly informed choices about the subjects they study and the skills they acquire. Too many do not link education, skills development and training with future job and progression opportunities.

A survey of 600 young people in Cheshire East reported that 87% of the young people surveyed did not receive sufficient information about local labour markets.

Unless individuals have regular contacts with local employers and sufficient knowledge about job and progression opportunities they will not understand the world of work and will make ill-informed decisions about the qualifications and skills they need to acquire.

In Cheshire and Warrington nearly 25% of our economy is based around manufacturing

compared with 10% nationally. Manufacturing and the other key sectors identified in the SEP are heavily dependent on attracting individuals who have a sound foundation of STEM and digital related qualifications as well as a range of the employability skills that all employers need (team working, resilience, problem solving, etc).

Despite this strong STEM and digital-related business base, we have a number of challenges:

- we need more young people to gain the basic English and maths skills that would enable them to progress into STEM and digital careers.
- we have relatively fewer students taking STEM and digital related A levels (26% compared with 29% nationally) and at least 88% of our apprenticeships are non-STEM or digital related compared with 85% nationally.
- we do well in terms of the total numbers of apprenticeship starts (approx. 9,000 in 2014/15) but only 4.7% of apprenticeship starts were higher level apprenticeships and most of these (92%) were in non-STEM and digital related subjects.

- only 4% of the training and education funding for adults not training for apprenticeships was in engineering and manufacturing technologies and only 2% in science and maths.
- we need to secure our share of the Government's target of 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020 - this would equate to around 43,200 starts by 2020.

Although Cheshire and Warrington has relatively high numbers of workers with degree level qualifications, many of these individuals are older workers. The proportion of people aged 20-39 with degree level qualifications increased by only 1.5% between 2004 and 2012 compared to 9.6% in the UK. This is exacerbated by 5,000 young people from Cheshire and Warrington each year choosing to go to Universities outside the area.

### Job and progression opportunities in Cheshire and Warrington

Cheshire and Warrington is already a successful economy. We have a wealth of high performing, productive businesses with international reputations as well as a strong base of small and medium sized businesses. In total, we have over 70,000 businesses including sole traders.

The SEP sets out the ambition to grow our economy to at least £50 billion per annum of gross value added, create 120,000 net additional jobs and be 20% more productive than the UK average by 2040.

As well as ensuring that we have sufficient highly skilled and adaptive people to fill the new jobs we also have replacement demand from over 230,000 jobs by 2025. This is the highest driver of future labour demands in Cheshire and Warrington – particularly for manufacturing (35% of the workforce are 50+), public administration (33% of the workforce are 50+) and transport and communication (27% of the workforce are 50+). This replacement demand alone suggests a deficit of up to 60,000 graduates.

Finding suitably qualified and resilient individuals to fill new jobs (120,000 by 2040) and replace those retiring (230,000 by 2025) will be a major challenge with a current population growth rate of 4.2% (barely half the national rate) and around 160,000 young people aged 5 to 18 years old in our schools. We are already a net importer of workers from surrounding areas with around 126,000 people commuting into Cheshire and Warrington every day.

### Localised areas where residents are unemployed or economically inactive and wanting work or earning below the living wage

In Cheshire and Warrington, compared with the national averages, we have relatively few people that are unemployed but we still have approximately 19,000 unemployed people and a further 19,400 that are economically inactive due to long-term ill health. Many of these individuals have complex social and health problems that prevent them training and learning and moving into employment.

Although we have one of the highest proportions of workers qualified to National Vocational Qualification Level 4 (NVQ4) and above (39.7%) and lower than average numbers of residents with no qualifications (7.3%), 25% of our workers (118,000) earn below the living wage - they are in work, on benefits and not progressing. We also have 870 young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) who are known to local authorities and many more who are at risk of becoming NEET. These residents are not benefiting from the growth in our economy

For these residents skills and learning need to be part of a holistic service utilising every engagement opportunity to enable them to move into work and progress. There are also significant numbers of individuals with complex problems that prevent them from being ready for work. For these individuals training and education might be one of the key components of a support package designed to bring them closer to the labour market.

## 3. OUR FUTURE PRIORITIES

In identifying the key challenges and developing our future priorities we have consulted extensively with a range of employers, training and education providers, local authorities and other key partners. As part of the discussions we have identified lots of existing good practice but also a large number of poorly co-ordinated activities.

Throughout the initial consultations and discussions highest priority was given to reducing the number of initiatives and addressing the mismatch between the skills and education needed for the job and progression opportunities in Cheshire and Warrington and the skills and qualifications being studied by local residents. We also recognise the importance of integrating skills and education with the other enablers of inclusive growth.

Our three priorities for action are:

- *To ensure everyone in Cheshire and Warrington is fully informed about the career and progression opportunities open to them we will ensure that employers are at the heart of inspiring and communicating to young people, parents, teachers, professional youth workers and individuals seeking work or who want to progress in work about new technologies, career and progression opportunities in Cheshire and Warrington. We will build on the good practice of the pledge model which acts as the 'glue' to bring employers together with the current plethora of careers advice and guidance initiatives both in school and in out of school activities.*
- *To improve the overall quality of the curriculum offer by supporting groups of employers in key sectors to work together with training, skills development and education providers, local authorities and other partners. Working together they will pool expertise and resources, establish a critical mass of learners and develop coherent packages of training and education with an initial focus on STEM and digital skills and the key sectors identified in the Strategic Economic Plan. This collaborative work could work through a virtual Institute of Technology to ensure all our learners are able to access outstanding lifelong teaching and learning that enables them to access jobs,*

*progress, and benefit from economic growth.*

- *To support these priorities, we will establish a communications hub to provide coherent messages about jobs and progression opportunities across Cheshire and Warrington.*

The Employers' Skills and Education Board believe that if we focus our actions and investments on these three priorities, we will deliver our other priorities of:

- *retaining and attracting graduates,*
- *increasing the number of STEM and digital skills and*
- *enabling individuals to find a job and progress in employment or start a business.*

Underpinning these priorities is the importance of developing a more coherent and 'outstanding' curriculum offer across Cheshire and Warrington. Because of the speed of change in the nature of jobs and the levels of innovation the education, skills development and training system must be flexible and resilient.

We will continue to encourage a more innovative approach to the curriculum offer, but it will be built on existing good practice where businesses are at the heart of working with training, skills development and training providers to design and deliver the training, education and employability skills that employers need.

During the development of our priorities many businesses and key partners also stressed the need to ensure a coherent approach to skills and education across all aspects of the Strategic Economic Plan including responses to innovation and inward investment opportunities and influencing housing and transport policies. For example, transport to access education and learning and affordability of travel and provision of buses.

To facilitate the delivery of these priorities the LEP will want to focus the use of public sector funds including the Local Growth Fund, European Structural Investment Funds, Adult Education Budget, the Apprenticeship Levy and the Workforce Development Fund.



## 4. DELIVERY PLAN FOR THE NEXT EIGHTEEN MONTHS

**The Delivery Plan will focus initially on the three key priorities:**

- **A coherent programme of action around employers inspiring, informing and communicating via a network of pledges**
- **A more coherent curriculum offer**
- **A communications hub**

This is not just an issue about students, skills providers and colleges. It is also about employers. If we can make young people and individuals seeking work or wanting to progress in work aware of the future opportunities available, then their demands of training institutions will change.

To address the mismatch, it is critical that we ensure that young people, their teachers, other professionals that work with young people, and parents and individuals who want a job or want to progress in work make informed decisions about the subjects they need to study to enable them to

access jobs and progression opportunities. To achieve this, we will put employers at the heart of inspiring, informing and communicating about new technologies, job opportunities and progression pathways.

Employers say they have skills gaps and shortages and complain about college provision but not enough employers are offering jobs, placements or apprenticeships. As a result, the skills and education people are demanding from colleges do not match the skills employers want.

Employers working with schools and their community is also important because we know that young people who have at least four meaningful contacts with employers are less likely to become not in education, employment or training (NEET) and more likely to increase their earnings when they start work.

The pledge model has been identified as an example of good practice that puts employers at

the heart of inspiring, informing and communicating with young people. It provides an opportunity to develop a coherent, more strategic programme of sustainable, action based around a network of pledges and a communication hub.

The pledge model provides a “glue” to bring together all careers education based initiatives. This provides a more coherent and joined up approach to careers education and reduces the noise for all stakeholders.

The Cheshire & Warrington pledge model would be a network of local pledges that puts employers at the heart of inspiring, informing and communicating with young people to support their exploration of future career opportunities and to become work ready. Businesses provide inspiration and information to help young people identify their career options while developing their workforce of the future.

The pledge model is not yet another initiative. Crewe and Macclesfield are already working with





existing initiatives in Crewe and Macclesfield to encourage and support a more coherent service to local schools, youth organisations, employers and communities from the range of different careers, advice and guidance initiatives on offer.

Working in partnership, the pledge model also helps to ensure individuals seeking work or seeking to progress in work have access to the information they need to develop the skills employers are seeking.

The Employers' Skills and Education Board have invited local partners to develop a business plan to expand the pledge model across Cheshire and Warrington. To date, the following programme of actions involving employers has been identified:

- *Show-casing career pathways and progression opportunities*
- *Exciting young people, their parents, youth professionals and teachers and people seeking work about new technologies*
- *Offering work experience, apprenticeships and jobs*
- *Working with education, youth professionals and skills providers to support the delivery of the curriculum*
- *Co-ordinating activities to simplify the offers by encouraging collaboration between different organisations (Careers Enterprise Company, Inspiration Advisors, All About STEP, Colleges, Jodrell Bank, Daresbury, Alderley Park, National Apprenticeship Service, National Careers Service etc.)*

In developing the programme of actions, it will be critical to ensure it is coherent and tailored to the specific needs of key groups (young people – primary and secondary, unemployed people, people in work who want to progress, teachers, youth professionals and parents).

It will also be important to articulate the opportunities and benefits to employers, teachers, youth professionals and local providers of careers, advice and guidance of working together to share resources with each other and with schools and local communities, sharing good practice, challenging stereotypes and establishing and communicating with networks of alumni.

### **A more coherent and 'outstanding' curriculum offer – an 'Institute of Technology' for Cheshire and Warrington**

The speed of change in the nature of work and the increasing levels of innovation means that we need employers to be at the heart of a skills and education system that is flexible and resilient. Employers need to have closer relationships with training, skills development and education providers to help shape the curriculum and ensure that it is resilient. This is in line with the approach adopted by the current Sector Deals.

### **We also need to improve the overall quality of provision and the curriculum across Cheshire and Warrington – we want all our learners to be able to access outstanding learning and teaching.**

The Area Based Review of FE provision has encouraged some rationalisation but more work is needed to encourage greater collaboration and stronger partnership working between training, skills development and education providers – we need a more coherent and high quality curriculum offer that provides easier access and clearer progression routes.

In June and September 2017, the Employers' Skills and Education Board hosted two workshops to consider how to develop a more coherent and higher quality curriculum offer across Cheshire and Warrington built around a virtual Institute of Technology.

An Institute of Technology in Cheshire and Warrington could build around our outstanding businesses and our USP:

- *Strong business base (manufacturing contributes 22% of the economy c.f. 9% nationally)*
- *Strongest GDP per capita outside London – and growing*
- *Part of the Northern Powerhouse*
- *Links across to Wales*
- *A strong rural economy (32% of the business base in West Cheshire is in rural areas)*

We want to establish a more coherent and 'outstanding' curriculum offer – initially building around key groups of employers with STEM and digital skills needs in key sectors (manufacturing and engineering, pharma and life science, energy and environment, chemicals, finance and

professional services, logistics and distribution) and around key geographies (Jodrell Bank, Daresbury, Alderley Park, HS2 and the Science Corridor). This could create a hub and spoke model of an Institute of Technology focused on STEM and digital skills and the priority sectors identified in the SEP. The hub and spoke model could also be supported via the communication hub.

We will focus on the strengths and specialisms of our employer base and look to align them with the strengths/specialisms of each of the colleges/universities e.g. aerospace in Macclesfield College, automotive in South and West Cheshire, agritech and animal genetics in Reaseheath, pharma and health in Warrington and energy, health and engineering at the University of Chester.

Groups of employers will work together with their supply chains, groups of local authorities, colleges, UTCs and the University of Chester to build on the Area Based Review and develop the single 'hub and spoke' based model around our strong employer base. Employers must be at the heart of the plans that will focus on levels 3, 4 and 5 technical skills with clear progression routes on to higher education and higher skills.

The Institute would enable groups of large and small employers to work together with training, skills development and education providers pooling knowledge and resources, establishing a critical mass of learners and developing coherent packages of training and education initially with a strong focus on STEM and digital skills and the key sectors identified in the SEP. Packages might include:

- *Distance learning and blended learning*
- *Specialised equipment facilities (in businesses and in colleges or schools)*
- *Developing skills and refreshing skills for new technologies*
- *Retraining and skilling to meet local employment opportunities*
- *Developing generic training packages that can then be tailored to different businesses or sectors*
- *Workforce development*

We aim to create a network of 'outstanding' training, skills development and education provision with strong working relationships between employers working in partnership with training, skills development and education providers across Cheshire and Warrington.

We could focus on the need to support our 70,000 businesses, enabling them to continue to grow and to create new jobs by improving connectivity (distance learning and digital) and the supply of science, technology, engineering and maths and digital technical skills.

We will explore the scope to develop a cocktail of funding using private and public-sector funding e.g. the Apprentice Levy, Local Growth Fund, European Funds and Adult Skills Budget.

There is also scope to part fund the Institute of Technology by bidding for Central Government funds.





## Communications Hub

A network of pledges and groups of employers working together to develop a more coherent curriculum offer across Cheshire and Warrington will require an effective communication strategy system delivered via a communication hub.

Employers are currently working together and with key partners on plans to develop and maintain a communication 'hub' with easy access for key target groups (employers, young people, unemployed people, people in work who want to progress, teachers, youth professionals, parents, etc). Information could be 'owned' and kept up to date by the contributors to the communication hub.

It is important that local information is presented through town websites at a local level. Each local pledge website will have access to Cheshire & Warrington information connecting all pledges together and sharing knowledge and data.

In developing a communications hub, it will be important to understand:

- *Who will use the hub and why it will be used;*
- *The core functionality, the technical design and legal responsibilities;*
- *How people will be drawn into using the hub;*
- *Who owns the hub and how it will be maintained – contributors will need to have vested interests in ensuring the information/content is up to date;*
- *The nature of customer journeys and the key 'pain points' which make progress difficult or impossible;*
- *The minimum viable proposition – what must be delivered and when should it be delivered to achieve real impact.*

The hub should address a number of key issues.

- *Need to inspire individuals to consider and understand all the career and progression opportunities open to them;*
- *Must connect to information about local economies and local businesses that is up to date and engaging;*
- *Be sustainable;*

- *Have tangible benefits to employers – for example enabling businesses to recruit from a bigger, more diverse talent pool;*
- *Develop positive messages and case studies;*
- *Contain data and stories that are built around material that employers have already developed – it is important not to try to 'straight jacket' employers into providing standardised content;*
- *Reduce and rationalise the multitude of information that is already being transmitted about careers and progression opportunities – there are currently so many initiatives that key messages are not getting through.*

As a first step, it has been agreed that further information is needed about current customer journeys (including those of young people or adults seeking advice about career opportunities and progression pathways, parents and employers). A number of focus groups of young people will be run to establish a better understanding of what drives and influences their decisions about the careers and progression pathways they choose to follow. Information about the current practices of employers is also being collected.

## Links to the Strategic Economic Plan

Skills and education are key components of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and must be closely integrated with the other key components of the SEP. The skills and education priorities for business growth and employment need to respond to innovation and inward investment opportunities and influence housing and transport priorities. For example, particular concerns have been expressed around the need to ensure that the transport and housing delivery plans address the importance of being able to travel to learn or to work experience and the access to affordable housing for young people who want to study and/or take up new job opportunities within Cheshire and Warrington.

Over the next year we will work with the regular refreshes of the SEP and with the development of the supporting delivery plans for transport, housing and innovation.

## 5. NEXT STEPS

Over the next few months we will develop business plans for:

- *the delivery of a network of pledges,*
- *the development of an Institute of Technology*
- *the development of a communication hub.*

The plans will be costed and will draw on investments from the public and private sectors.

## 6. GOVERNANCE

The priority actions will be overseen by the Employers' Skills and Education Board that advises the main LEP Board.

The Employers' Skills and Education Board will work collaboratively, in partnership with the local authorities, colleges and other training and skills development providers to ensure we build on existing good practice and monitor and evaluate our progress and overall impact.

## 7. FUNDING

The aim is create a system that is sustainable and the LEP Board is committed to working with partners to focus the Local Growth Fund and other public and private sector funds on the skills and education priorities that have been identified. Where there is this strategic fit there may be scope to match the investments with European Structural Funds.



## 8. MEASURING IMPACT, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

### Measuring Impact

Measures of success are currently being developed for the network of pledges, the communications hub and the Institute of Technology. It will be important that the measures are agreed with all our key partners. The following summarises the current thinking about measures of success.

### Network of pledges and communication hub – measures of success

Baselines will be established and SMART targets agreed in the following key areas:

- *Numbers and range of people using the pledge network*
- *Levels of satisfaction of people who use the pledge (employers, young people, parents, teachers, youth professionals, individuals looking for work or wanting to progress in work)*
- *Levels of satisfaction of local providers who currently work with young people, employers and/or schools, voluntary organisations that work with young people outside school, and colleges - have they benefitted from a more coherent offer?*
- *An increase in the number of schools achieving the Gatsby benchmark.*
- *Increases in the numbers of young people choosing to study for STEM and digital skills and qualifications and acquiring the relevant qualifications at key stage 3, 4 and 5.*
- *More young people showing clear progress and application of key employability and citizenship skills and fewer employers complaining about the lack of employability skills and reporting skills shortages and gaps.*
- *More curriculum being developed and delivered in collaboration with groups of employers.*

### Institute of Technology

Baselines will be established and SMART targets agreed in the following key areas:

- *More curriculum being developed and delivered in collaboration with groups of employers*
- *Improvement in overall quality of training and education in Cheshire and Warrington with more 'outstanding' training and education provision.*
- *Levels of satisfaction of employers, learners and training providers*
- *More highly skilled people being trained to meet business need – in particular, more technical skills and more graduates in STEM and digital subjects*
- *Reduction in the number of isolated initiatives and more coherent packages of education, skills, and learning with clear progression routes*
- *More in business training and development including continuous professional development.*

### Evaluation and Review

Monitoring and evaluation protocols will be agreed with the governing bodies of the pledges and the Communications Hub and the Institute of Technology.

Progress will be reviewed regularly by the Employers Skills and Education Board that advises the LEP Board in consultation with local authorities, colleges and other training providers.

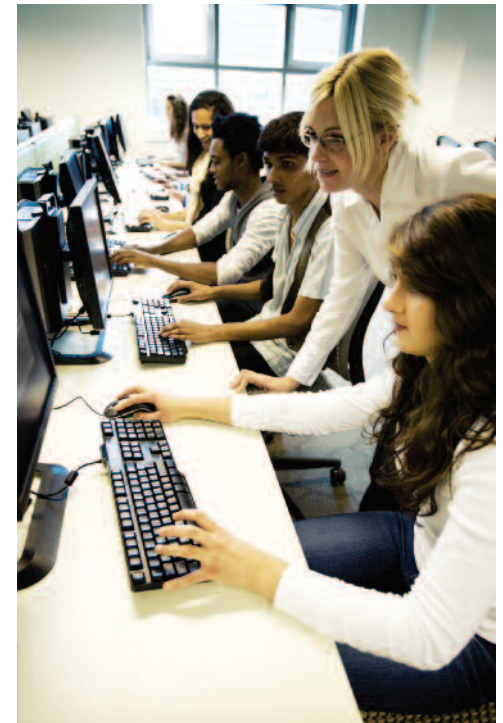


## Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership

### 9. LOOKING AHEAD

We could achieve even more if we could, in agreement with Government:-

- *Reduce the duplication of effort across national initiatives ensuring a more coherent approach and a requirement for national programmes to work in partnership with Cheshire and Warrington.*
- *Secure a more flexible approach to the use of the Apprenticeship levy so that groups of employers working together can use the levy to support up-skilling, side-skilling and re-skilling current workers as well as supporting apprenticeships.*
- *Provide more support for work placements in SMEs.*
- *Deliver an Institute of Technology initially focussed on delivering STEM and digital skills.*
- *Secure a replacement for the European Structural Fund programme that is flexible, of the same value and encourages co- investment by employers as well the public sector.*
- *Work with Cheshire and Warrington to devolve the 19+ Adult Education Budget.*
- *Appoint a Regional Schools Commissioner that is co-terminus with our sub-region.*
- *Secure a structural review of student loans and the impact they are having on industries that cannot pay off or pay the salary and package level that lawyers and bankers are offering our students. This is discouraging qualified and skilled graduates to join the industries where we need them – e.g. biochem, engineering – the packages in these industries are not attractive enough.*



## ANNEX A – MEETINGS, DISCUSSIONS AND WORKSHOPS HELD DURING THE PREPARATION OF THE SKILLS AND EDUCATION PLAN

The SEP sets out the intervention priorities and, in terms of skills and education, made it clear that we are seeking to increase the numbers of learners with STEM skills and bring employers much closer to the design and delivery of skills and education, as well as inspiring our learners.

The SEP was the subject of extensive consultation. Since the publication of the SEP, the LEP's Employers' Skills and Education Board has continued to lead the design of this work in consultation with a range of partners including:

- Meetings with each member of the Employers Skills and Education Board (list of members at Annex B) individually and collectively at meetings of the Employers Skills and Education Board in March, April, May, June, July, September and October.
- July and September meetings of the Employers Skills and Education Board were extended workshops with invitations issued to College Principals, Local Authorities, additional businesses and other training providers.
- Meetings of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board in June and October and Strategy Board in October
- Meetings with a range of employers including Barlow Electricals, Tiger Trailers, Thor Chemicals, Atkins, Robertson Construction, Mid Cheshire Health Trust and Unilever.
- Meetings with local authorities including Skills and Growth Company, West Cheshire Employment and Skills Board meetings, West Cheshire and Chester Skills Commission meeting on 4 July, Warrington Employment and Skills Action Group (March), Constellation Partnership and secretariat to 'Into Work Board'.
- Meetings of Cheshire and Warrington College Principals and Association of Colleges – individually and collectively in April, May and July.
- Meeting with College Chairs in September.
- Chester University Strategic Economic Development Stakeholder Steering Group meetings in February and April.
- Meeting at Thornton Science Park, Alderley Park, Jodrell Bank and Daresbury.
- Meetings with Crewe and Warrington UTCs.
- Meetings with ECITB in May and July and with CITB in July
- Meeting with Growth Hub.
- Meeting with Antoinette Sandbach MP and Mike Amesbury MP
- Meetings with Cheshire Business Leaders Executive Group.
- Meetings with Chairs of Warrington and Cheshire West's Secondary Schools network.
- Meeting with Cheshire and Warrington Lord Lieutenant.
- Meetings with North West Business Leaders Chair of Skills Group and Chief Executive.
- Meetings with Careers Enterprise Company, National Apprenticeship Service, Inspiration Advisors.
- Meetings with Total People in April and September and LTE in April.
- Meetings with Federation of Small Business in March and September.
- Cheshire and Warrington Sub-Regional Annual Summer Conference on Inclusive Growth with workshop on skills and education.
- Meetings with Universities of Liverpool, Lancaster, Staffordshire, Keele, Sheffield, Wolverhampton.

## ANNEX B – MEMBERS OF THE EMPLOYERS SKILLS AND EDUCATION BOARD

- Clare Hayward (Chair)
- Neil Warren (Jungheinrich)
- Jim Carroll (Mobica)
- Dame Pat Bacon (Health sector)
- Lynne Williams (Bentley)
- Paul Taylor (Taylor Business Park)
- Paul Colman (South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry)
- Fraser Kearney (Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub)
- James Richards (Network Rail)
- Margaret Cheshire (Essar Oils)
- Phil Atkinson (Daresbury)
- Jo Tipa (National Skills Academy Nuclear)
- Jenny Clucas (Cogent Skills)
- Meredydd David (Representing Providers)
- Jane Ingram (Halifax/Lloyds Bank)
- Mark Livesey (LEP)
- Pat Jackson (LEP)

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