

**Learning City York
York's Lifelong Learning Partnership**

York's Adult Learning & Skills Strategy, 2007 – 2010

**March 2007
Final Version approved by the Partnership Board**

1. York City Learning Vision

York City Vision and Community Strategy (2004-2024), entitled 'Without Walls', has a **learning vision** for the City of York:

'To ensure all those who live and work in York have the education and skill that will enable them to play an active part in society and contribute to the life of the city. To ensure that the city is seen as an internationally recognised centre for education with a commitment to lifelong learning and creativity which is second to none.'

Since the launch of the York Community Strategy, Learning City York (York's Lifelong Learning Partnership) has been leading on the Learning City theme, on behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership.

2. Learning City Strategies to support York's Learning Vision

14-19 Education and Training Strategy, 2005 - 2008

In November 2005, Learning City York published a three year 14-19 Education and Training Strategy, 2005 - 2008, that was brought together by providers and support agencies working with 14-19 year olds within the city.

The vision for this strategy is:

'To develop such a high quality city-wide provision for young people, aged 14-19, that all learners are absorbed by their education and training and excited by the opportunities it opens up for them. We aim to prepare young people to benefit from the opportunities available to them and empower them to succeed in the rapidly changing society and economy of the 21st century.'

Priority interventions centre around 5 key areas of activity:

- Curriculum breadth - developing vocational learning for all learners
- Personal development, challenge and enrichment - providing personalisation of learning through a 'Personal Challenge'
- Progression Pathways - raising participation and attainment rates post-14 and post-16 and enhancing information, advice and guidance
- Individual learner support - enhancing support and establishing a formal structure for both young people and parents to have a voice in implementing and developing the strategy
- Quality Assurance - developing more effective partnership working

Adult Learning and Skills Strategy, 2007 - 2010

In May 2006, Learning City York established a multi-agency Adult Learning and Skills Steering Group, whose main task was to develop and implement a three year Adult Learning and Skills Strategy for York, 2007 - 2010, that aims to:

- respond to the needs of individuals, families, communities and employers
- take account of national, regional and local strategies and respond to future economic needs and forecasts
- maximize the contribution of learning to social cohesion, local regeneration and economic growth

Supported by funding from both the Learning and Skills Council North Yorkshire and City of York Council (Adult and Community Learning), the group was able to appoint an Adult Learning and Skills Co-ordinator to assist with the developments and it was agreed that the strategy would:

- provide a city-wide collaborative framework that underpins the learning and skills strategies developed by individual partners in York
- build capacity of individual partners to address key emerging issues and achieve shared targets for different groups of learners
- develop and implement an annual action plan with mechanisms to monitor, review and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the strategy based upon agreed measures and shared targets.

3. Key emerging issues to address

National, regional and local strategic drivers

In developing this strategy, the priorities, objectives and targets identified within the following national, regional and local policies, reports and plans have been taken into account:

- Leitch Review 2006
- Northern Way Priorities 2005
- Yorkshire Forward Regional Economic Strategy 2006 – 2015 - Objective 3: Skills Priorities for Benefiting Business (6 priorities, developed by the Regional Skills Partnership)
- Sub-Regional Investment Plan: Emerging priorities 2007 – 09 (5 Transformational themes; 4 Spatial Themes)
- National Learning and Skills Council Priorities 2007 / 08
- Strategic Area Review 2005 (completed by the Learning and Skills Council North Yorkshire)
- Economic Development Plan for the City

There are nine key cross-cutting strategic drivers that have been identified from these documents:

- i. Create a new enthusiasm for learning, widen participation, raising attainment & skills levels amongst individuals (those in work & those seeking to enter or return to work) and employers
- ii. Stimulate an enterprising, entrepreneurial and creative culture
- iii. Worklessness - Bringing more people into work, tackling barriers to inequalities & supporting the most disadvantaged
- iv. Low skills - Skills for Life (literacy & numeracy) and L2 qualifications
- v. Intermediate skills (L3)
- vi. Higher Level Skills (L4) and employment opportunities to attract & retain graduates, plus skills for technicians, crafts people and managers (L3 – L5)
- vii. Supporting key clusters
- viii. Spatial themes for York (Leeds City Region and its hinterland), marketing York's cultural strengths and increasing York's competitiveness
- ix. Using evidence and further investigation to support appropriate responses and drive up quality and choice

Needs of individuals, families, communities and employers in York

The mapping and analysis exercise of the demand for and supply of adult learning and skills in York, completed by Learning City York December 2006, identifies the needs of individuals, families, communities and employers in relation to the key cross-cutting strategic drivers.

The emerging local trends from this exercise have informed the development of a vision, transformational learning and skills issues to address, corresponding targets, priority interventions and short, medium and long-term actions for the city-wide Adult Learning and Skills Strategy.

Note: It was agreed that the supply side mapping and analysis would focus on the following:

- Learning & Skills Council and Higher Education core funded activity
- discretionary project funded activity
- provision delivered by local York providers, for adult learning to support those age 19+
- Formal Learning – where there are defined learning outcomes, agreed between the learner and another person, learning takes places and a review evaluates whether the agreed outcomes have been met
- not private sector or in-house training

4. Background to York's Emerging Issues

Current Situation

York's population in 2006 is estimated to be 186,800, with 1.5 million people living within a 45 minute drive of the city centre. Approximately 73% of York's residents are of working age (16-65), with 81% economically active. In 2004/05 the employment rate was 79.4%, which was one of the highest in the region and 5.5% above the national average. Analysis contained within the State of English Cities report (ODPM, 2006) demonstrates that York's economic performance is in the top quartile nationally for Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita and boasts one of the strongest performances in the north, contributing to almost 30% of total North Yorkshire GVA in 2003 (some £3.4 billion).

York's Future

In seeking to establish York as a leading business centre within a prosperous and thriving economy, providing good quality jobs to all, there has also been a growing recognition of the importance of developing a sustainable economy which enhances the overall quality of life for both residents and the 4 million annual visitors to the city and that balances the social, economic and environmental components of the community.

Total employment is forecast to rise to 117,000 jobs by 2026, with an estimated net growth of 1000-1500 jobs each year. Jobs have been and will be created in most sectors, with retail, hospitality and tourism together with public administration, education and health currently accounting for circa 60% of jobs, followed by banking and finance (14%). Traditional manufacturing industries, however, can no longer be expected to provide the job numbers they once did and in 2006 the city saw dramatic job cuts of around 1400 from both manufacturing (Nestle and British Sugar) and the business service sector (Norwich Union). The key component of York's modernising agenda is the Science City initiative. Employment in the three fast-growing science clusters (Bioscience & Healthcare, E-Science - IT & Digital, Creative including Heritage & Arts Technology) is on track to achieve a target forecast of 19000 Science City jobs by 2026, which will account for 16% of total employment.

Challenges

If new employment opportunities and skills needs of existing businesses are to be accessed by the city's residents, economic development initiatives must be underpinned by policies and strategies which address workforce skills and inclusion issues.

Whilst York has a relatively highly qualified workforce¹, high levels of employment and a median weekly pay that is currently higher than the regional or UK averages, 11.7% of the working age population have no formal qualifications, 23% experience numeracy and literacy problems, unemployment is at a five year high, those in the lowest income quartile (weekly pay in York), is lower than the national average and there are pockets of low level qualifications, high levels of incapacity benefit claimants and relative deprivation by ward, as well as low level skills and skills gaps by industry sector.

¹ York performs above both the regional and national averages for the number of working age adults with qualifications equivalent to NVQ Level 3 and NVQ Level 4/5.

As the profile of York's knowledge-led economy develops, and the nature of both the traditional and established job market changes, the city needs to be able to support emerging workforce skills needs, as well as community inclusion issues. Furthermore, as a net importer of workers, and a growing ethnic minority and migrant population, there is an important role and opportunity for the city to play in terms of developing the learning and skills needs of individuals from York's hinterland, as well as embracing the needs and opportunities of a diverse culture.

5. York's Vision for Adult Learning and Skills

Building on the city learning vision, and in light of the key strategic drivers and emerging local issues, Learning City York's Adult Learning and Skills Steering Group has identified the following commitment as central to the learning and skills strategy for adult learners (19+):

'To stimulate a new enthusiasm and value for an adult learning culture in York, that widens participation, raises aspirations and awareness of local labour market needs leading to a higher skilled and creative learning community, recognises the importance of learning for personal and social development and encourages an ethos of joint responsibility for investment in learning between the individual, the provider and the employer.'

Although the words need refining, discussions with key stakeholders suggest a degree of consensus with the core values articulated in the starting statement.

6. Target Customers

The key target groups that the strategy aims to engage with and meet the needs of are:

- **Individuals**
 - those in work
 - those seeking to enter or return to work
 - those seeking to acquire new skills for work-related progression
 - those seeking to acquire new skills or engage in learning activity for personal and social development
- **Families**
- **Communities**
 - **of place:** the most disadvantaged wards, in terms of high levels of incapacity benefit claimants and relative deprivation, as well as low level skills (Westfield, Clifton, Guildhall, Heworth, Hull Road & Acomb)
 - **of common interest:** BME groups; individuals with learning difficulties and disabilities; older individuals; etc.
- **Employers**
 - micro businesses (up to 10 employees)
 - small and medium enterprises (10 to 250 employees)
 - large private sector (250+ employees) and public sector

7. Transformational Learning and Skills Issues for York

Following a wider stakeholder event in February 2007, at which the proposed vision, target groups, and outcomes of the mapping and analysis exercise were shared, the following 5 issues emerged as priorities that partners wanted to address:

i) Shaping and Stimulating Demand for Learning and Skills Development

Stimulating a new enthusiasm and value for learning, that widens participation and attainment amongst individuals (both in work and not in work), as well as employers.

ii) Worklessness and Disadvantaged Communities and Individuals

Tackling worklessness and focusing on disadvantaged communities and people with low levels of skills or qualifications, whether in employment or not.

iii) Skills and Competencies for Economic Growth

Developing & renewing skills to facilitate economic growth appropriate to the changing key employment sectors.

Key employment sectors for York (both now and in the future):

- retail (distribution), hospitality and tourism
- public administration, education and health
- banking, finance and insurance services
- science city sectors (bioscience, e-science - IT & Digital, Creative)
- manufacturing
- construction

Skills to be defined and targeted as:

- sector specific - technical & higher level (leadership & management)
- generic competencies (customer handling; team working; problem solving; communication; creativity, innovation, etc)
- entrepreneurship and enterprise
- basic skills (literacy, numeracy, IT, English spoken as a foreign language)
- work attributes

iv) Employer Engagement

Increasing employer engagement in the skills agenda, in terms of:

- investment in training of workforce
- articulating skills gaps and skills needs
- developing appropriate new products and services with providers

v) Learning for Personal, Social and Community Development

Maintaining a balanced offer of Adult Learning across the city, that provides opportunities for personal, social and community development.

8. Targets to address York's Transformational Learning and Skills Issues

Some city-wide targets to address these key transformational issues have already been agreed by partners through the process of producing a **Local Area Agreement 2007 – 2010** (LAA) for the city, which was approved and signed off by Government Office in December 2006. The Economic Development and Enterprise block of the LAA identifies 7 outcomes and 42 indicators. Those that directly relate to the development of this strategy include:

Outcome 4: Widen participation and raise attainment and skills levels throughout the working age population - with indicators for:

- worklessness & employment levels
- skills for life
- Level 2
- Level 3
- Level 4

Some additional targets will need to be developed to help measure the impact of interventions against sector specific skills and generic competencies, as well as employer engagement and supporting the learning offer for personal, social and community development.

9. Strategic Priority Interventions to address Transformational Issues

In order to support partners in addressing the key strategic drivers and local transformational issues, in relation to the needs of the identified target groups, the following five areas of activity have been identified as priorities to take the strategy forward over the next three years.

a) Product and delivery development

Capitalising on the strengths of providers, establish a co-ordinated approach (using labour market information and other relevant data) to inform partner planning and changes to learning and skills provision, on an annual cycle, which meet the needs of different target groups.

By doing so, we aim to ensure that a blended mix of provision is offered that balances:

- needs of employers and employees in key employment sectors i.e.: demand-led activity
- learning for personal, social and community development, including opportunities for older learners (not in work)
- opportunities for acquiring skills not just qualifications
- opportunities for different learning styles & different lifestyles
- self-financed and subsidized learning opportunities

b) Progression Routes

Urgent development of integrated pathways and more transparent progression routes for all types of learning from entry/L0 to L4 and L5 (including professional qualifications), supported by effective and impartial information, advice and guidance.

By doing so, we aim to:

- breakdown barriers of progression, in particular for those seeking to return to work or seeking progression from lower level jobs
- sustain the high level knowledge base for a competitive city region - ensuring that those already with high level skills and qualifications remain competitive in the job market, as well as enabling progression to those levels of attainment
- increase the scale and impact of Higher Education - placing the expansion and diversification of higher education learning opportunities as central to increasing economic activity and broadening cultural life

c) A York Recognition Framework

Develop a city-wide recognition framework for competency skills gained through both formal and informal learning. This framework will recognise generic, specific and basic skills and attributes, appropriate to the needs of different learner groups and different learner journeys.

By doing so, we aim to:

- raise the profile and value of informal learning for personal, social and workforce development
- recognise, as a city, that the development of key competencies / skills are as important as formal qualifications to the growth of key sectors in York
- demonstrate that progression or 'distance traveled' can be measured from formal, informal and non-learning activities
- develop a tool that can record and measure the skills that evidence has told us the workforce will need
- measure impact of intervention for those clients furthest away from learning or the labour market
- capture not only intermediate outcomes towards learning / employment goals, but also incidental or unexpected benefits of intervention

d) More effective partnership working and alignment of activities across different stakeholders

Embed a better understanding and alignment of learning and skills activities between Learning City York, Science City York and Higher York, ensuring that all providers and agencies (both large and small) are able to contribute to and benefit from city-wide initiatives that support the needs of the different target groups.

e) City-wide infrastructures and processes

Support and build capacity of partners to address emerging issues and effectively target and engage with different audiences to achieve shared key performance indicators, through establishing a collaborative approach to city-wide:

- *Marketing and communications*
- *Information, advice and guidance (IAG)*
- *Discretionary funding bids*
- *Assessing impact of interventions*

By doing so, we aim to:

- engage with new learners, through a range of targeted activities
- raise aspirations and connect learning to economic opportunity, as well as providing clearer guidance to progression pathways
- engage employers in renewing skills (especially those not involved in workforce development), working more closely and effectively with different intermediaries, such as the Future York Group, Chamber of Commerce, Business Link advisers, Train to Gain Brokers
- facilitate a clearer, more coherent, cross-referral process for both individuals and employers receiving IAG, to create a 'virtual' one-stop-shop for individuals and employers, as well as clearer guidance to progression pathways
- draw down project funding to address local needs in an innovative and targeted way

10. Action Plan

An action plan is being developed to highlight how the strategy can be implemented in the short, medium and long term (Year 1, 2 and 3+). The plan will include mechanisms to monitor, review and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the strategy, based upon agreed measures and shared targets.

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