



City of  
Stoke-on-Trent

# ADULT SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT FRAMEWORK 2025-35



## Vision

Alignment with the Corporate Strategy and Economic Development Strategy

Key challenge: reducing persistent inequalities

The Corporate Strategy aims to do this by:

- Harnessing the ambition and innovation of local businesses and organisations.
- Finding the right balance between traditional productivity-based economic models and more wellbeing-centred approaches to economic development.
- Ensuring that more of the wealth we create within our city stays in our city.
- Helping residents who experience hardship and poverty to secure better jobs and higher wages.
- Supporting residents with long-term health problems to be economically active.

The Economic Development Strategy will do this by:

- Supporting businesses to invest, innovate and grow, creating more good jobs.
- Using our influence to maximise economic and social benefits of procurement and investment.
- Involving businesses and communities in developing and implementing the strategy.
- Championing better quality employment and enabling residents to secure better work.
- Community wealth building

## Purpose

The City Council has developed this short Framework document to enable all partners within the city and supporting the city to understand what we are collectively seeking to achieve in improving our skills and employment levels.

Skills are the foundation of flourishing lives, communities, and economies. We cannot build a bigger and a better economy, more directly linked to the wellbeing of our population and planet, without a functioning skills system. That is why the objective of this framework is to support residents to lead resilient and productive lives. The skills and employment landscape is complex and this document seeks both to explain that landscape and also how we will harness all the opportunities available for the benefit of our residents and businesses.

The Framework describes the relationship between national and local policy. It explains our local context in terms of the needs of residents against our current offer. It sets clear priorities for action and describes in broad terms how they can be met. Finally, it sets out how we will measure progress.

Our intention is that all skills and employment work within the city should fit within this broad framework while being permissive in terms of welcoming innovation and organic collaboration across sectors. The framework will aim take full account of the City Council's economic strategy and the key sectors identified for economic growth: digital/ICT, creative industries (including creative digital) and advanced manufacturing (including but not only high-tech ceramics). We'll need to show how we are supporting a business growth environment for these three sectors in particular.

The Framework is not in itself a strategy or plan but describes the suite of plans that we will require for success. The actual development of those plans will be employer-led with strong input from providers and service users. Some of that work is already under way. The Framework should be regarded as a live document that will evolve over time. It will be reviewed annually.

## The national policy context

A new national Skills Policy Board Skills England was formed in September 2024, and its vision outlined in its inaugural report; *Driving growth and widening opportunities* is to tackle the “long list of challenges” and the “fragmented and confusing” skills system.

Skills England will also work with the Industrial Strategy Council (ISC), trade unions and local leaders on the introduction of a new Invest 2035 strategy, this will aim to secure investment into crucial sectors of the economy to drive long-term sustainable, inclusive and secure growth

- **Critical skills demand:** Nearly 1 in 10 roles, or over 2.5 million jobs, across the UK are in critical demand, with more than 90% requiring training or education.
- **Growth priority:** The government recognises skills shortages as a significant barrier to economic growth. Addressing these shortages is essential to the Government’s growth strategy.
- **Regional disparities:** Skills challenges vary by region, with higher unemployment and fewer opportunities outside London. Localised solutions are needed to balance economic outcomes.
- **Skills shortages:** In 2024, 62% of organisations reported they faced skills shortages. Source British Chambers Business Barometer June 2024
- **Employer challenges:** Employers face difficulties with the qualifications landscape, mismatched skills supply and a lack of mechanisms to invest in skills.
- **Learner barriers:** Pathways to skilled careers are unclear, and the current system does not adequately equip learners with essential skills like literacy, numeracy and digital capabilities.
- **Future skills needs:** Demographic, technological and green transitions will shape future skills demands, with expected growth in areas like AI, healthcare, green jobs and education.
- **Sector-specific impacts:** Industries like construction and hydrogen will need new qualifications and an expansion of green-skilled workforces to meet future demand.
- **Technology and skills:** The adoption of new technologies, including AI, will increase demand for skills across sectors, particularly in areas like cybersecurity.
- **Social value of apprenticeships:** Apprenticeships can generate significant social value, particularly for disadvantaged groups. The report notes that apprentices from such backgrounds see larger wage premiums than their peers.
- **High-demand sectors:** Critical industries such as digital, green technologies and construction face severe skills shortages. Upskilling in these areas is crucial to meet future demand.
- **Modern Methods of Construction (MMC):** MMC could reduce reliance on traditional skilled labour in construction and improve productivity in the sector.
- **Employer investment decline:** Employer spending on skills training has dropped by 19% over the past decade, exacerbating the skills gap. The report urges businesses to reinvest, with support from the Growth and Skills Levy.

In its 2024 Manifesto, the current Government promised a Youth Guarantee “to bring down the number of young people who are not learning or earning.” The “guarantee” is one of access to training, apprenticeships, or support to find work for all 18- to- 21-year-olds, to also include two weeks’ worth of work experience for every young person.

## National Skills Priorities

The national skills priorities take into account the Skills England report, Industrial Strategy Priorities and Plan for Change and are areas with high volumes of vacancies which are expected to increase; long-term structural barriers to recruitment, retention and progression issues; and are important in providing opportunities for employment in key growth areas such as green jobs<sup>2</sup> and net zero, creative industries and science and technology (including AI and quantum computing).

These sectors are:

- advanced manufacturing
- clean energy industries
- creative industries
- construction
- defence
- digital and technologies
- financial services
- health
- life sciences
- professional and business services

The city, in line with the Government directive, will be looking to develop a small number of high-quality priority programmes that have been co-designed with providers such as local colleges and employers. There remains a statutory need for providers of post 16 education and training such as FE colleges and the council's ACL service, to produce annual accountability statements that state how they will design their curriculums and training to meet both local and national needs. We will work with providers and feed these individual accountability statements onto the framework as it develops.

In response to the emerging changes to policy around skills and employment, the Local Government Association has produced its own strategic framework that sets out how Local Authorities can work towards meeting national priorities in their own locality. The Local Government Association has also produced a set of 'Work Local' proposals that include the following key areas:

- young NEETs supported into their first job or career path (Youth Pathways)
- adults that need to secure and progress in work (Working Futures)
- local employers to address workforce needs, help residents gain skills for jobs and develop a culture of lifelong learning (Skills for All)

These strategies would be locally planned and commissioned through outcome focused Local Employment & Skills Agreements (LESAs) over a period of at least three years, setting out an integrated strategy, funding, and delivery plans and involving other local partners.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is also introducing a new national Supported Employment programme (previously known as Universal Support). The National Supported Employment Programme is a significant component of the Get Britain Working White Paper, focusing on individuals with disabilities, health conditions, and others facing complex challenges in securing employment. Its primary goal is to help these individuals—especially those classified as "economically inactive" or those employed but on long-term sick leave—re-enter or sustain employment.

## **English Devolution Bill**

The proposed framework will need to develop and flex to meet the needs of the likely devolution and local government reorganisation impacting Stoke-On-Trent and Staffordshire in the next few years. Under a combined authority, Adults Skills is likely to be co-led by an elected Mayor and employer-led body. In order to best meet these future needs it is proposed that this framework will be an interim one in the short term. The framework does build in a broad horizon in the terms and the skills needs of the wider region.

## **Get Britain Working White Paper**

The White Paper sets out a range of proposals to reform employment, health, and skills provision to tackle economic inactivity and to support people back into good work.

The Paper focuses on driving growth through employment, with an ambitious goal to achieve an 80% employment rate, aligning the UK with other top-performing global economies. It emphasises the challenge the UK currently faces with the recent sharp rise in the economic inactivity rate, which reached 21.8% between June and August 2024. Stoke-on-Trent faces a higher inactivity rate of 24%, underscoring the urgency for local action...

The reform presents Stoke-on-Trent with a real opportunity to tackle this challenge head-on, there are several key proposals set out in the White Paper that will allow us to do so:

### **Tackling Ill Health**

Government proposals also include expanding existing Individual Placement and Support (IPS) for those with severe mental illness, building on existing local initiatives. Stoke-on-Trent is currently served well by the 'Step On' service, part of North Staffs Combined Healthcare Trust, who are a long-established and successful IPS service supporting people accessing secondary mental health care services.

The 'Connect to Work' programme is being introduced and will be managed via local authorities, working closely with healthcare services to provide bespoke employment support for people with disabilities, health conditions, or other complex barriers to work. Stoke and Staffordshire are set to receive grant funding of £5.9m per annum, with delivery expected to commence in the Autumn of 2025, across Stoke-on-Trent.

In relation to Disability Benefit reform, Government will publish a consultation on reforming the Work Capability Assessment in Spring 2025 to better support people with health challenges into work. This is a chance for us as stakeholders to have a voice in shaping a system that promotes better employment outcomes.

Local authorities will be empowered to develop Local 'Get Britain Working Plans', working closely with stakeholders, key institutions and businesses, to capitalise on existing and emerging initiatives to reduce inactivity and promote good employment through cohesive eco-systems.

### **The Youth Guarantee**

With regard to supporting our Young People - A Youth Guarantee is being introduced which will bring together a range of existing entitlements and provisions that 18- to 21-year-olds can access, to ensure all are "earning or learning" – including funded FE provision, apprenticeship funding for those aged up to 21, and an expanded Skills Bootcamps offer.

Trailblazers for the Guarantee will quickly test solutions in other regions, giving us valuable insights to adapt locally, in preparation for full roll out.

The existing Apprenticeship Levy will be transformed into a more flexible Growth and Skills Levy, to deliver new foundation and shorter apprenticeships in key sectors. Employers and Skills Providers will

also have opportunities to offer a wider range of modular vocational training courses eligible under the new Levy, which the Government is currently consulting on via the recently formed Skills England.

### **Jobs and Careers Service**

The White Paper outlines ambitions to introduce a new single service, which will merge Jobcentre Plus with the National Careers Service. This initiative aims to provide a more streamlined and accessible service that supports individuals across various stages of their working lives, not just those receiving benefits. A key feature of this service is its emphasis on digital transformation, which will enhance accessibility and provide tailored resources and guidance online for those equipped to use them.

### **Get Britain Working**

The Get Britain Working White Paper provides an exciting roadmap for reducing unemployment and economic inactivity, and it offers a valuable opportunity to address local challenges through tailored, collaborative solutions.

For Stoke-on-Trent, it provides us with an opportunity to leverage national funding, bolster existing initiatives, build stronger partnerships, and ensure that all our residents have the chance to reach their full potential.

### **The Local Policy Context**

The framework sits alongside and aligns with both the Corporate strategy (2024-28) and recently approved strategies such as the Economic Development Strategy (2024-28) and the new city prospectus. It also moves on and builds from legacy programmes which have already or are due to complete their cycle in 2025 such as the Skills advisory panels, Local Enterprise Partnership and Local Skills Improvement plan (LSIP).

The Framework aims to support the City commitment to the COP Charter, a united commitment alongside the County of Staffordshire to tackle climate challenges, marking a pivotal moment in bringing together local organisations, businesses, and communities to drive meaningful change.

In particular, a drive to support the skills and workforce development required to promote the continued expansion of green and sustainable industries, specifically in Stoke-on-Trent this would include a District Heat Network and sustainable travel plans. The initiative will involve collaborating with key stakeholders to develop a comprehensive Portrait of Place, assessing the current situation, defining the desired future, and charting a collaborative roadmap for achievement.

The Framework will aim to utilise the Skills and Growth Levy, capitalising on levy sharing to address skills shortages / local workforce needs. The aim is to work with partners to support priority the city's identified growth clusters/ sectors in terms of talent pipeline and upskilling to meet existing skills gaps

### **Jointly the city's strategies will aim to deliver the following:**

- NHS Individual Placement Support programme (via ICS).
- Connect to work programme to help long-term sick or disabled adults into employment.
- JET team programmes.
- A skills academy and apprenticeship hub for the housing sector.
- Work readiness programmes.
- Sector-based work academies (Future Skills Academy).
- UKSPF-funded interventions at community level.
- Deliver Government's Plan for Jobs programme locally.
- Bus, rail and active travel upgrades to improve access to employment throughout the city.

## The local context – why this all matters?

The key challenges this city faces – a landscape of inequality

Challenge	Measure	City data	National avg.
Low-value housing stock suppresses the city's Council Tax liability.	Housing in Council Tax bands A-C	<b>93 %</b>	<b>65.6%</b>
Workforce participation levels are stubbornly low	Young people (16-17) who are NEET	<b>3.7 %</b>	<b>3.6 %</b>
	Economically inactive who are long-term sick	<b>39.6 %</b>	<b>25.4 %</b>
Early years development gap is impacting academic attainment levels across all subsequent key stages.	Percentage of school-ready children aged 5	<b>61.3 %</b>	<b>65.2 %</b>
	Key Stage 4 attainment score	<b>41.1 pts</b>	<b>50.9 pts</b>
Low education and skills levels are constraining wage growth, leaving around a quarter of adult workers in the city reliant on the minimum wage and top-up benefits.	Adults with Level 3 qualifications or higher	<b>50 %</b>	<b>61.5 %</b>
	Percentage of students going to University	<b>37 %</b>	<b>44 %</b>
	Gross weekly full-time pay (by residence)	<b>£608.80</b>	<b>£729.80</b>
Outcomes for vulnerable children and young people are not good enough.	Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	<b>7.5</b>	<b>3.9</b>
	Children in care per 10,000 children	<b>191</b> <i>(highest in UK)</i>	<b>70</b>
Poor population health and wellbeing, including mental health, are undermining outcomes for adults.	Average healthy life expectancy from birth	<b>55.9 years(M)</b> <b>55.1 years (F)</b>	<b>61.1 (M)</b> <b>63.9 (F)</b>
	Suicide rate (per 100,00 population)	<b>16.4</b>	<b>10.4</b>
Crime and anti-social behaviour levels are persistently high.	Crime & ASB (cases per 1,000 population)	<b>14.1</b>	<b>8.1</b>
High poverty levels are undermining wellbeing levels, fuelling crises and driving demand for support services.	Children living in poverty (after housing costs)	<b>43.2 %</b>	<b>30.0 %</b>
	Households experiencing fuel poverty	<b>24.7 %</b> <i>(highest in England)</i>	<b>13.1 %</b>

## Key economic indicators

Economic inactivity: 38,200 people (24.3% of workforce) not in employment or seeking work. 17,100 are long-term sick (double the UK average).

Industrial and occupational structure: only 43.8% of residents are employed in managerial and professional occupations, compared to 52.2% for UK.

Skills & qualifications: 19,500 working age people (12.4%) have no qualifications (UK average is 6.2%). Only 28.3% have Level 4+ qualifications (42.9% for UK).

Income: gross disposable household income per capita is £15,799. Gap to UK average GDHI has grown from £4,800 to £6,200 since 2010.

Benefits: the total level of unclaimed benefits for the city is estimated at between £80-100m per annum, including £38.9m of unclaimed Universal Credit.

Average pay: full time wages for people living in the city are £90.20 a week less than the UK average and £61.30 less than the West Midlands average.

## Employment levels by occupation & skill level

Analysis of the city's labour market shows significant gaps to the national average in relation to the proportions of workers employed in:

- Senior managerial, professional or associate professional roles.
- Low- or unskilled elementary occupations

Occupation level	Stoke-on-Trent workforce	UK average workforce	City's gap to the UK average
Managerial & professional	43.8 %	52.2 %	10,125 fewer
Administrative & skilled	18.7 %	18.5%	250 more
Caring, leisure, sales and customer service	15.1 %	14.2 %	1,085 more
Elementary occupations (low skilled/unskilled jobs)	22.4 %	9.5 %	8,800 more

Unemployment levels remain stubbornly above Staffordshire and England averages and are currently rising. 25% of those in work are on minimum wage. Too many residents cannot access the job opportunities created because of poor health, low skills, lack of transport. We are also a city with high levels of mobility, we need to engage with residents new to the city, to establish what skills and qualifications they are bringing into the City. We also need to know are these skills and qualifications being fully utilised and what are their training and careers needs- linked to strategic priority; *Work with our communities to make them healthier, safer and more sustainable*

Global evidence shows that cities typically out-perform other areas in respect of GDP growth. Stoke-on-Trent's economic performance is crucial for north Staffordshire as a whole.

- Stoke-on-Trent has an unusually high proportion of its economy provided by manufacturing and a highly diversified economy. Also, locational advantages are creating benefit in certain sectors.
- Crea-tech sector is at a higher GDP contribution density and higher than most UK cities. We must build on this momentum.
- Business start-up rates in the city are too low. Business survival rates are weak. Highlighting the importance of maintaining momentum of the Enterprise Zone performance over last 8 years.

- Certain sectors, e.g. retail, office, are struggling badly and need active intervention to support rationalisation and re-positioning in changed market circumstances.
- The city is running out of quality commercial sites for development. It is important that the new Local Plan and land assembly/reclamation activity creates a refreshed pipeline.
- Poverty is concentrated in particular areas of the city, reflected in low incomes and high household need. We will identify and challenge Patterns of economic inactivity in the City – identifying any areas of concentration that require a more targeted response /provision – linked to strategic priority; *Support vulnerable people in our communities to live their lives well – levels of deprivation, skills attainment levels, unemployment rates and levels of economic inactivity linking to Index of Multiple Deprivation/LSOA's across the City*
- There is a legacy low level of Further and Higher Education level qualifications amongst city residents. We will work with our HE and FE providers Ensuring the post 16 skills and education offer across the City is responsive and able to best meet the needs of both residents and employers and that the pathways into skills and careers are supported and enhanced, though quality careers advice and guidance in the City's schools.

## Our future vision

Our vision is that Stoke-on-Trent is a renowned for its access to life-long learning, where the population want to better themselves through access to education, skills and employment opportunities, and are enabled to take those opportunities and increase their contribution to the economic and social life and wellbeing of the city.

This vision sits alongside the future plan for the city which includes five main missions

- 1 Securing Economic Growth
- 2 Clean Energy, Sustainable Transport and Improved Local Environment
3. Regenerate our City
4. Removing the Barriers to Opportunity
5. Improving the Health & Wellbeing of Our Population

The Framework will also support and enhance the Corporate Strategy of the City “Our City. Our Well-being especially the ‘Skilled’ priority.



The Framework will strive to support and showcase creative heritage including the recent award of World City Craft status, the resurgent ceramics industry and projects such as Made in Stoke which provide a springboard of aspiration and pride that can bring energy and momentum to the Framework.

Our renewed focus on supporting our residents through Family Matters strategy which includes a Family Learning strand, this looks to support parents and carers in upskilling and accessing training and further education.

## **Our local priorities**

To secure this vision, our local priorities are:

- Ensure the skills and employment 'climbing frame' enables residents to gain and combine skills that local employers will need in the future. As well as improving the attainment levels of all young people in the city, in all phases of education, the framework will echo the vision that we are a city of second chances, supporting adults to secure the basic and advanced skills they need.
- Continue to develop vocational skills pathways, including further increase in numbers and choice of apprenticeship and specific focus on green skills, conservation skills and grow-our-own approach in sectors with key skills shortages
- Improve the range and quality of our 14-19 education offer in the city, balanced between academic and technical opportunities, with a focus on local employment destinations
- Improve the 16-25 skills offer in the city, ensuring that it is fully inclusive and there is a sufficient quality provision to meet future employer needs
- Significantly increase the range and quality of apprenticeships available to young people
- Reform our advice and development offer in partnership with the county wide Careers Hub, with a particular focus on those most at risk of being NEET. This will need to be flexible to meet the needs and vision of 'Getting Britain Back to Work' and emerging developments around a revised National Jobs and Career Service
- Develop a refreshed Adult Skills Delivery Plan, building on the LSIP. Make a compelling proposition to Government, in context of a potential devolution deal, for greater collective control over adult skills resources to enable delivery
- Working with our Higher Education and Further Education providers to embrace the opportunities offered by specific sectors such as digital and advanced manufacturing, in bringing forward bespoke development programmes
- Align the framework with the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Growth Hub to support its delivery of high-quality enterprise support that enables more residents to establish and grow their own businesses
- Utilising our Existing Jobs, Enterprise and Training (JET) service to establish a high-quality work and health programme, to support people currently out of work back into work, and to prevent others from falling out of the labour market for health reasons.
- In partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, create a business data base of city-based employers who can offer quality work experience and/or offer community engagement activities – and where needed provide support in helping employers develop this offer.

- Develop a bespoke and innovative city approach enterprise support – to be driven in young people as well as adults - developing entrepreneurial skills at a young age in schools/colleges will then drive future start-up and survivability rates

## Key Focus

### Addressing Skills Mismatches and Economic Needs

A key challenge facing the local economy in Stoke-on-Trent is the disconnect between workforce skills and employer requirements. Without a structured approach to identifying and addressing these mismatches, businesses will continue to face recruitment challenges, and individuals will struggle to access sustainable employment.

To mitigate this, regular skills assessments should be conducted in collaboration with local Colleges/Universities, training providers, and employers. These assessments will ensure that curriculum design aligns with current and projected labour market needs, supporting the development of a workforce equipped with industry-relevant skills.

As economic trends evolve, the City's skills strategy should remain flexible and responsive to emerging workforce demands. Growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing, digital technology, and green industries require a pipeline of skilled workers, yet current training provision does not fully address these needs.

Staffordshire University and Stoke-on-Trent College, alongside key employers, should play a central role in this effort by ensuring training programmes are tailored to growth industries, including:

- Expanding engineering and automation training to meet the evolving demands of the manufacturing sector.
- Strengthening digital skills education, from fundamental IT competencies to advanced specialisms such as coding, cybersecurity, and data analytics.
- Developing sustainability-focused training in areas such as renewable energy technologies, electric vehicle maintenance, and eco-conscious construction methods to support the region's transition to a low-carbon economy.

Embedding industry-led training approaches within the local skills strategy, the city can better prepare individuals for long-term, sustainable employment.

To future-proof the local workforce, the framework should incorporate:

- Upskilling and reskilling initiatives that enable workers to transition into high-demand sectors.
- Employer-led training programmes, ensuring businesses have direct input into curriculum development and workforce preparation.
- Stronger links between education providers and industry, creating clearer pathways for people of all ages into high-growth careers.
- Investment in lifelong learning, ensuring that individuals at all stages of their careers can access relevant training opportunities

## How we will achieve our priorities

We will achieve our priorities through the following steps:

- a) Establishing a clear set of plans that all fit within this single framework:
  - Education Strategy (in development)

- Economic Development Strategy (already published)
  - 14-25 Skills and Employment Strategy (already in development)
  - Build on and sustain the existing Local Skills Improvement Plan led by the Chamber of Commerce
  - Adult Lifelong Learning Plan
  - Work in partnership with the County and other Authorities to further improve the quality and reach of a high-quality careers service in line with the emerging approach to a revised Job and careers service guided by national policy.
  - The Framework will work alongside and support a range of other council strategies and approaches that are being developed including; YPLS strategy, Economic Strategy, Our Children Our Family's strategy, Futures plan, Independent Living strategy, ongoing UKSPF projects.
- b) Establish a clear set of roles and responsibilities with:
- The local authority prioritising its strategic, convening, commissioning and quality assurance roles and moving provision of services to arms-length of the council, so there is a proper system of accountability and provider neutrality,
  - Securing clarity as to the governance role of the Skills Advisory Panel and how this will add value to the city offer.
- c) Maximise partnerships with Training Providers. Stoke-on-Trent's business community does not currently maximise the full potential of local educational institutions and independent training provider support. Strengthening these partnerships will expand apprenticeship opportunities, address local skills shortages, and support workforce development through the new Skills and Growth Levy. This funding mechanism will provide a critical opportunity to enhance training provision and align skills development with employer needs across key sectors such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, and crea-tech.
- d) Ongoing provision mapping to ensure we have the right offer of the right quality in the right places.
- e) Build on the success of the quality local Multiply programme and build a legacy approach to numeracy training and support via the new UKSPF funded Stoke by Numbers programme.
- f) Fully incorporating skills and employment requirements within the work of the Inclusion Partnership for young people and the Learning Disability and Autism partnership for adults.
- g) Establish a work and health programme for the city, in partnership with DWP, DHSC and local NHS bodies – this is underway with the health and well being strategy
- h) Consider allocation of future Shared Prosperity Fund resources to help fulfil the ambitions of this framework, recognising that this is time limited and longer term options will be needed.
- i) Embrace the role of larger employers to act as anchor institutions, maximising opportunities through their own weight as employers and service providers. Empowering our city-based employers to offer high quality work experience and placement. educational engagement for residents of all ages not just those in full time education.

## How we will organise ourselves

The ambitions of this framework can only be delivered through cross-sectoral local partnership combining funders, commissioners, providers, service users and employers. The council will convene a Local Skills and Employment Partnership to oversee the work brought forward within this framework, providing oversight, coherence and mutual accountability.

The Board will maintain a strong relationship with the county council and the Chamber of Commerce, recognising the need for cross-border collaboration on key parts of this agenda. We will ensure there is clarity of roles and avoidance of duplication of effort.

There will be a strong focus on ensuring that a number of key enablers are in place:

- a workforce development plan to ensure quality of provision
- a financial plan that models future funding requirements and challenges against the agreed strategies and plans
- a strong analytical function so that we have an ongoing understanding of changing need, quality of provision and impact on outcomes
- partnership-based asset and digital plans that enable the ambition of our skills plans to be executed to the full extent
- a clear approach for incorporating service user and target client voice
- the embedding of a clear commitment to addressing inequalities and promoting equality and diversity in the way that this framework is operationalised
- development of high-quality commissioning practices that embed an evaluative approach within the commissioning cycle.

## How we will measure progress

Area	Indicator	Pre-work learning and formal education	Life-wide learning and training	Employer access to talent	Support into and between work
	Economic activity (increasing)				✓
	Low or no qualifications (decreasing)	✓	✓	✓	✓
	In work Universal Credit (decreasing)				✓
	Median wages (increasing)		✓	✓	
	GVA and productivity (increasing)		✓		
	Skilled jobs (increasing)		✓		
	Participation rates (increasing)	✓			

	Progression at 18 into FE, Vocational and HE (increasing)	✓			
	Skill levels (increasing)	✓	✓	✓	
	Development of industry/skill relevant courses.	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Employment levels (increasing)		✓		✓
	Economic inactivity (decreasing)				✓
	Travel to work and learn times (improving)	✓			✓
	Improvement in the number of residents with at least a standard achievement in English and Maths	✓	✓	✓	✓