



Report of the Chair, Bradford Employment and Skills Board to the meeting of Health and Wellbeing Board to be held on 15th June 2021

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Subject:

The Employment and Skills Partnership: Building on the Economic Recovery plan through People, Skills, Prosperity: sustaining and supporting an inclusive economy for the District.

Summary statement:

This paper sets out the strategic approach taken to employment and skills through the partnership and potential areas for support for Board members to consider.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

The intent of the work of the employment and skills partnership is to create a more diverse workforce (by age, geography, ethnicity and disability) which is better equipped to deliver on current and future economic demands, with greater resilience.

This contributes to the Council's objective to promote inclusive growth through ensuring those most disadvantaged in the labour market are able to get the skills they need and access good jobs.

Cllr Imran Khan
Deputy Leader

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Portfolio: Education, Employment and Skills

Overview & Scrutiny Areas:

Children's Services / Regeneration and Environment

1. SUMMARY

This paper is presented to inform discussion of the skills challenge in the District, how we are currently working as a partnership to address this across the breadth of employment and skills partners, and what more needs to be done.

2. BACKGROUND

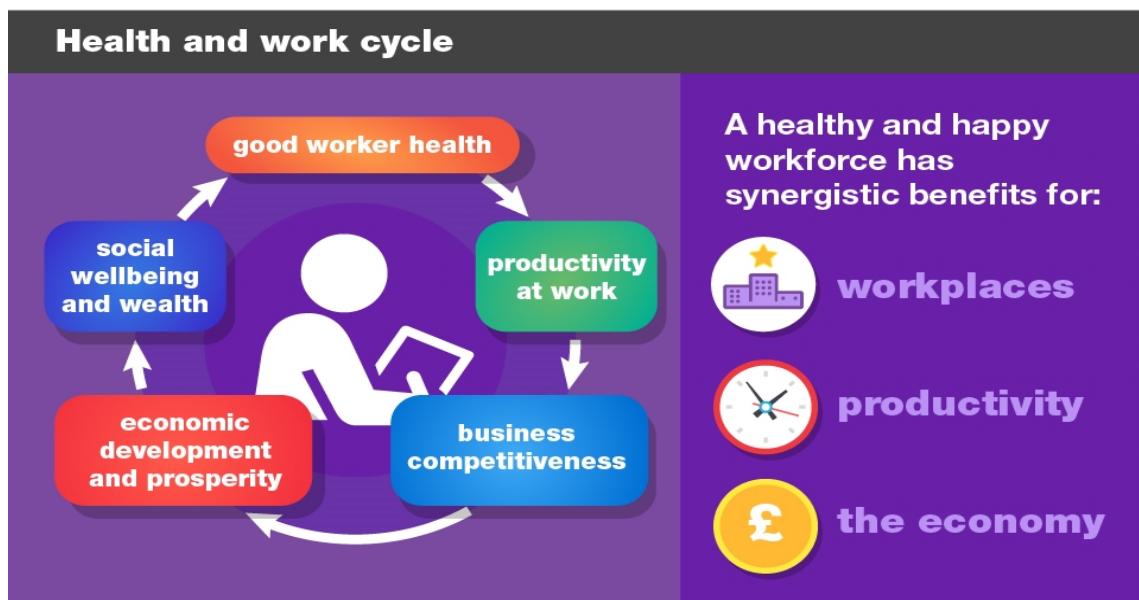
The Employment and Skills Board was established in its current form at the start of 2020 to oversee progress against the District Workforce Development Plan, “People Skills Prosperity” that was launched in February 2020.

Clearly the pandemic changed the scale and shape of the strategic approach that the Board is taking. It is well understood that Covid 19 has amplified inequalities in many aspects of society this is very much the case in terms of skills and the labour market.

We believe the way forward we had set out in People Skills Prosperity still resonates, but clearly our work has strategies have adapted to not only address underlying low skills levels in Bradford’s workforce, but also to respond to the critical issue of historically unprecedented job losses and unemployment over the last 12 months.

In leading the skills response to recovery, the Board continues to work towards our common goals in developing the local workforce: meeting employers’ needs; improving business productivity; and delivering an inclusive economic growth that benefits all of our communities.

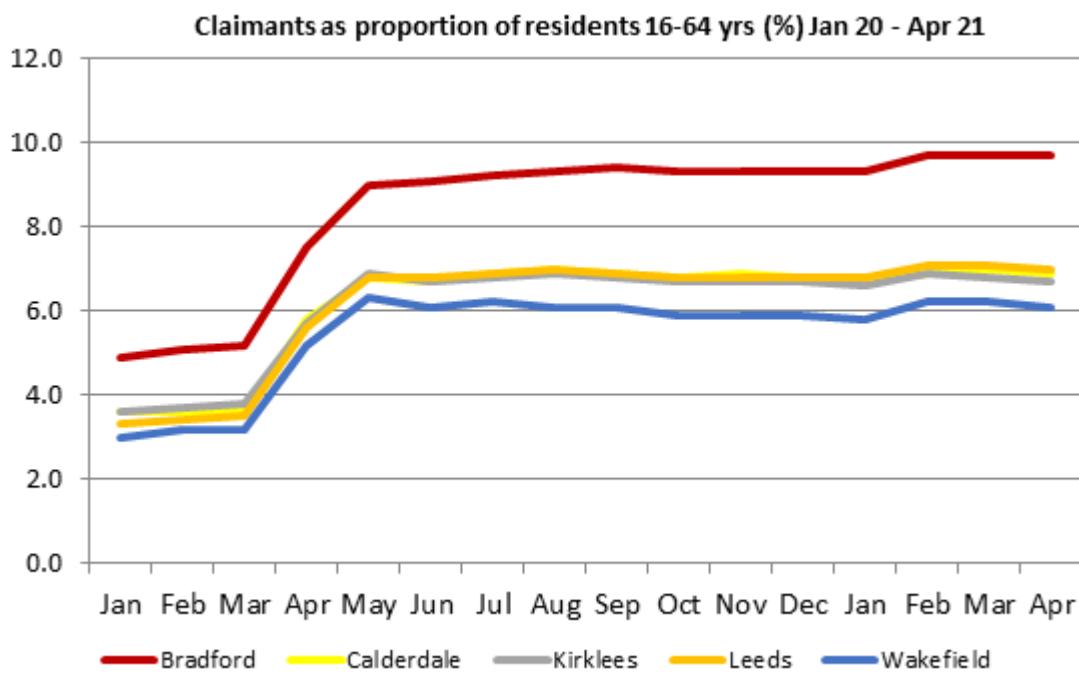
Being in good work is better for your health than being out of work. There is clear evidence that good work improves health and wellbeing across people’s lives and protects against social exclusion. Conversely, unemployment is bad for health and wellbeing, as it is associated with an increased risk of mortality and morbidity. The WHO has set out the work and health linkages as below:



3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Context and impact of Covid-19

The economic impact of the pandemic has been immediate and unprecedented. The data below demonstrates the extent of this and how it has impacted the need for support locally.



This situation has exacerbated a number of outcomes such as employment rate and qualification levels held by the working age population that were already below national benchmarks and Leeds City Region performance prior to the pandemic. These two areas were specific targets in People Skills Prosperity and are carried forward as priorities in the Recovery Plan.

Mirroring the overall trends, specific demographics that have historically been disadvantaged in the Labour Market have been especially impacted by the economic situation. For example, the youth claimant rate in the District has increased from 7.8% in March 2020 to 15.2% one year later. The approach to supporting young people is discussed in more detail at section 3.3.

The impact has also been uneven in terms of geography, and again has followed existing inequalities in the labour market resulting in stark variances across the District, for example the claimant rate Manningham - the highest for any ward in the district is at 17.7%, considerably higher than Wharfedale with the lowest rate by ward at 2.6%.

The Employment and Skills Board as our strategic partnership leads the shaping of the response to these challenges. The key considerations and activity that the Partnership is focussing on are discussed below.

3.2 *The SkillsHouse Partnership*

In June, the Council's Executive approved an investment of £3.75million into SkillsHouse over the next three and half years, that will enable the Partnership to expand and implement a localities based multi-agency model and work with 24,200 residents over that period. This will directly support the "Access to Work" and "inspire, Reskill and Upskill" strands of the District Recovery Plan.

Whilst the model has been rapidly and significantly up-scaled the dual customer approach SkillsHouse has taken from its establishment remains at the core of delivery: to offer local jobseekers early help to support access to training that will enable them to secure and sustain work; and to enable businesses to meet their workforce needs through hiring local talent.

Expanding the SkillsHouse Partnership is:

- providing a set of interventions that address underlying local need: skills gaps, low pay, low productivity, and inequality in the workforce, and support economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic;
- creating a unified brand for locality-based multi-agency service delivery bringing together early help, information, advice and the delivery of employment, skills and wider support to individuals and employers;
- developing an integrated system that will address complexity and duplication; improve local services; and respond more efficiently to the District's needs;
- cultivating a good quality and sustainable provider market providing employers with better access to a growing skilled and local workforce; and
- building the capacity of economically deprived communities to be better able to access support earlier from a range of partners, to progress into training and sustainable employment opportunities.

A consequence of the persisting economic challenge is that many of the first wave of new Universal Credit claimants from March 2020 have struggled to secure replacement work due to lockdown, and are now long-term unemployed. Effectively we now have three distinct levels of demand in the District:

- Residents that have recently become unemployed who in ordinary circumstances would be looking at relatively short (up to three months) interventions to find new work;
- Longer-term unemployed - including people who were unemployed pre-Covid and the newly unemployed from the first wave of the pandemic – who will require longer-term inputs to refresh skills/change sectors; and
- Those residents who were furthest from the Labour Market when Covid began to impact the economy and who require intensive long-term support to access provision to prepare for work.

During lockdown the SkillsHouse partnership increasingly focussed on working with the second level of demand set out above in addition to the first level and on training for higher level and in-demand skills. As such, as restrictions continue to ease and the economy recovers, our residents will be well-positioned to take advantage of new opportunities locally.

Partners have agreed to align all their adult skills and support offer to the

SkillsHouse partnership as the platform for the local strategic skills pipeline. The delivery partnership comprises: Airedale Voluntary Drug and Alcohol Agency; Bradford College; Brathay Trust; Bridge Project; Grange Interlink; Impact Hub CIC; Incommunities; Karmand Community Centre, Keighley College; Library Services; Shipley College; Skills for Work; and the University of Bradford.

Since September more than 2,000 local people have received a careers consultation through the partnership, over 7,400 have progressed into training and the partnership have led recruitment for key sectors during the pandemic, including staff supporting Track and Trace, Covid Hubs, and the vaccination roll-out. Consequently, more than 550 local residents have either progressed into work or received in-work support to sustain employment through the partnership since September.

Following the approval of the additional funding for SkillsHouse, governance arrangements have been revised and a new SkillsHouse Advisory Board has been initiated. The Partnership is reconfiguring the management information reporting and Board members now receive a monthly dashboard. The Board members share common organisational goals to ensure that public and private investment delivers an inclusive offer that is accessed by all communities and demographics.

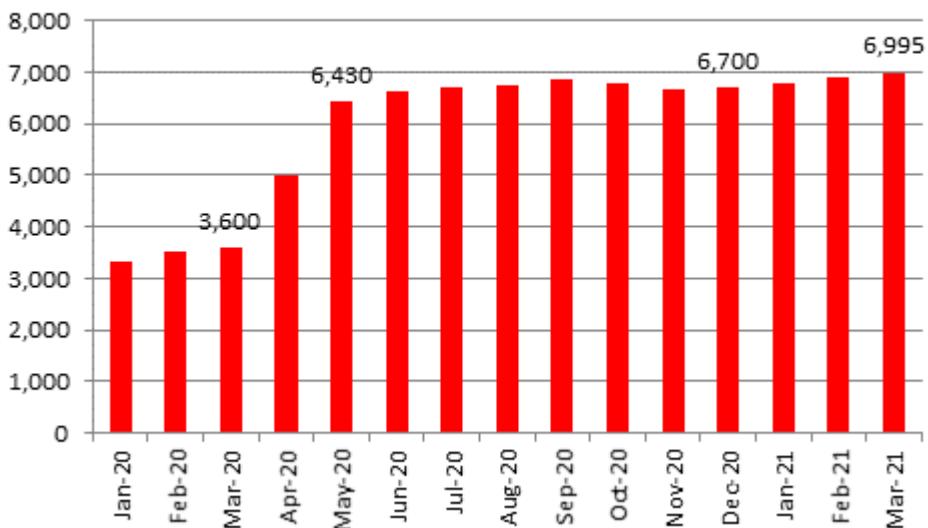
This will also inform discussion about deployment of resource. Based on current need at present the core city centre team is 12 x FTE, with the following post operating the specified localities: Bradford South/City 7 x FTE; Bradford East and West 8 x FTE; Shipley and Keighley 6 x FTE; and a district and system wide Business Services team of 5 x FTE. The continued monitoring of capacity against demand will ensure appropriate targeting of the resource and work to address the employment inequalities in the District.

3.3 *Youth Employment*

Nationally and locally it is a well-established trend that young people continue to be disadvantaged in the labour market, and Covid 19 has served to amplify this with the increase in young claimants locally greater than the equivalent increase across all ages.

The 18-24 year old claimant count rate for March 2021 is 15.2% compared to 7.8% in March 2020. The March 2021 number is 6,995 claimants, an increase of 94% in the past year (compared to a 90% increase in claimant numbers for all ages).

18-24 years claimant count numbers: Bradford District



Clearly this is a significant concern, especially as we are the youngest city in the UK. In March the partnership came together for a youth employment focus event hosted by the Council. Following this event, the Council has begun work to collate and package the support offer to young people. There is already considerable support and resource in place, but mirroring the overall employment and skills offer this can be hard for individuals to navigate, especially as arrangements, programmes and entitlements differ pre- and post-18.

This array of provision is being shaped into an offer consisting of six key themes, some of which are more traditional employment and education interventions, some of which will broaden the experiences available to our young people and support their 'whole self' development. As such, we envisage that young people aged 16-24 will as a minimum have access to:

- High quality careers education, information, advice and guidance in school or college, through a 14-18 service or the National Careers Service post-18.
- A learning offer that meets their needs with guaranteed progression into further learning, higher education, an apprenticeship, a job, or intensive employment support.
- An offer of an employment placement such as Kickstart, apprenticeship, work experience, and/or volunteering.
- Support to help start and grow a business through New Enterprise Allowance or a proposed Kickstart style offer.
- A range of cultural, sport and community-based activities.
- A mentor for anyone starting a business or who is either unemployed or NEET.

There are two key phases in the approach being taken:

Phase One - consultation and development of the approach, collation of the offer, development and implementation of a communications plan culminating in a launch of the offer (the name is being workshoped with young people in May) in June. This timing will coincide with the opening up of lockdown but also ensure young

people at key transition points will have full awareness of the support available ahead to the Summer and results days. The Council is considering how some of the Covid recovery funding can be used to support this; and

Phase Two – gaps analysis (this may be provision that does not have capacity to meet current demand/needs, or that is not in place at all) and developing a plan to secure appropriate resource to address the gaps, in addition to the continued promotion and evolution of the offer.

A critical part of the offer is the Kickstart programme which has been a significant success in terms of the response from local employers. The scheme provides six month paid placements and additional funding for support and training to 16-24 year olds. Through our partnership mechanisms, the Council is acting as a Gateway consortium for the District. The Gateway has submitted 944 placements to the DWP for approval across 168 local employers. Despite covid restrictions impacting workplaces and therefore starts on programme, almost 400 placements have either started already or are out for advert with imminent start dates.

In addition to this the Leader of the Council wrote to the Minister for Employment with an ambitious proposal to significantly uplift these numbers. Conversations are ongoing with DWP to implement this which will see the Council act as the employer for an additional 800 placements but place the young people in community settings and schools who have not yet engaged with the programme.

The breadth of this offer and our ambition for our young people mean that not only is partnership working critical in terms of delivering skills and training provision, there is scope for organisations to open up a range of practical opportunities for young people. We continue to work with local employers of all sizes (through the Careers and Technical Education partnership in respect 14-19 year olds and SkillsHouse for adults) to develop support for key interventions and would encourage members of the Board to consider opportunities they can provide in terms of:

- Hosting Kickstart placements;
- Work experience placements and for 14-18 year olds;
- Employer encounters for young people in line with the national Gatsby benchmarks;
- Placements for T level students;
- Supported internships for young people with SEND;
- Offering Apprenticeships;
- Transferring/committing Apprenticeship Levy to local businesses
- Undergraduate and graduate placements/internships;
- Recruiting to entry level positions through the Skillshouse partnership; and
- Mentoring

3.4 Skills White Paper and regional working

The Government published the White Paper, “Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunities and Growth” on 21st January, setting out its plan for reforming technical provision to address skills gaps in the context of Brexit, Green Jobs, and the pandemic.

There are a number of opportunities arising from the paper in terms of pilot opportunities and funding that the partnership is monitoring and view as an opportunity to build on existing strengths and to showcase the work of the sector in the District.

These have included the recent tender through the Community Renewal Fund as a pilot for the funding that will replace EU funding in the long-term, and trailblazers for the Local Skills Improvement Plans, the Chamber of Commerce, who are a member of the Board, have led a strong West Yorkshire bid and whether or not this is successful in becoming a trailblazer the bid can inform our work in this space when the approach is fully rolled out.

The Employment and Skills Board is also the strategic body that is working with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) to shape the local strategy for the adult skills budgets (including the Digital Skills Partnership) that have been devolved from central government. WYCA are a member of the Board and we have welcomed the opportunity this presents to develop an approach that will work for the partnerships and the CA in light of their duties to national government on this agenda.

3.5 *The Sectoral Approach*

In line with international research undertaken by the OECD and national policy, People Skills Prosperity set out the importance of sector-based development of the workforce. Through school and college, the approach with young people is led by the Careers and Technical Education partnership, most notably through the Industrial Centres of Excellence. 86 board members spanning 7 boards offer strategic insight between schools and industry, designing relevant industry pathway and skills development opportunities for young people. Last academic year, even with restrictions in place, 13,577 pupils accessed career support and 2,353 engaged with sector specific activity through ICE.

This year at board level members have reviewed the framework, comprising of 15 industry sectors and endorsing 78 pathways to take forward into September 2020. Additions to the framework include the inclusion of Energy, Environment and Utilities Technology sector, supporting the Economic Recovery Board's actions on the Green Economy.

Opportunities for young people to interact with businesses to inspire, reinforce learning and understand the modern work environment are critical to their chances of success and central to the CTE Partnership's approach. Bradford Manufacturing Weeks and Tech Week have also been significant successes this academic year despite the restrictions in place, Manufacturing Week engaged 4,551 students and Tech Week reached 10,439 pupils.

The sectoral approach can also transform the workforce. Through the Health and Social Care Economic Partnership (HSCEP) strategies have been developed to improve skills and working practice in the sector which are being operationalised through the One Workforce Hub. The HSCEP is currently developing the new Health and Social Care Integrated Workforce Strategy.

The strategy will set out the vision, purpose and strategic intent that will enable us to progress on our journey towards an integrated workforce across health and social care.

The strategy will set out a range of success measures and KPIs that will enable us to measure qualitative and quantitative progress. This will include (but not limited to) the numbers of:

- entry level roles filled through the SkillsHouse partnership model;
- graduates recruited into graduate level roles through SkillsHouse;
- apprenticeship opportunities (making best use of the apprenticeship levy); and of
- supported internships.

A key development the partnership is leading on has been around the transfer of Apprenticeship Levy funding to support the District. Significant funding for the sector has been secured through WYCA's Levy transfer scheme and the One Workforce Hub is coordinating and promoting the use of that in the District.

Additionally, a number of local Levy payers from this sector have agreed to gift 5 % of their Levy to local non-Levy organisation operating in Health and Social Care.

The One Workforce Hub has been to lead inclusive community recruitment for the sector. The Community Recruitment project has funded Community Engagement Officers to be based with the SkillsHouse service and the three local FE Colleges to ensure district-wide reach. The project initially focused on engaging with local communities, working with job seekers and supporting those furthers from the job.

During the first two years of the project (2019/2020 and 2020/21), we successfully provided information, advice and guidance to 1407 people from our local communities. Of these:

- 165 people have been supported to move into formal/ vocational health and social care related training
- 51 have been supported to take up voluntary work within the health and social care sector
- 253 local residents have been supported into jobs within the health and social care sector.

The focus of this project will now shift to recruitment and has established commitment from the Health and Social Care Economic Partnership to work towards a shared approach to entry level recruitment across the health and social care sector. This will enable SkillsHouse to provide a full end to end service for job seekers from initial referral to successful job outcome.

Supporting the sectoral approach to curriculum development and learning is the launch of development of Future Technology Centres and Hubs that cover a range of different areas of the economy. The FTCs plan to capitalise on accelerated technological change and will inspire careers of the future, the right skills and development and training and career prospects for those future jobs that are just beginning to break through into the economy. FE partners in the District are working to secure capital funding to underpin this development.

3.6 Inclusive workforce development

The case for diverse workforces is clear and underpinned by research by OECD, McKinsey, the CBI amongst many, and delivering inclusive workforces, culture and practice is at the heart of our plans. The Board links to Bradford for Everyone's Inclusive Employer Network and there is already considerable good practice in the District supporting groups that are under-represented in the workforce. The Council is one of the two lead organisations, with YBS, who are using measurement techniques developed by Grant Thornton to share their inclusion journey over the next twelve months with the Network.

For example, each of our colleges have supported internships programmes with employers to support young people with disabilities. In particular, the Project Search model operated by Bradford College replicates an internationally successful approach supporting young people through an initial placement with a long-term view to sustained employment in partnership with Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

The Council is also reviewing our internal approaches to deliver a more inclusive workforce. From this Summer the Council will pilot a Leaving Care Employment Programme to support a cohort of care leavers to access work with the Council, with a view to supporting progression into an Apprenticeship with the Council at the end of the programme. Wraparound support will be in place for the young person, in addition to support to Managers to enable flexible work practices and arrangements to build effective transitions into the workplace. Alongside this there will be a training offer, particularly focussed on the Maths and English skills required to underpin an Apprenticeship.

Through the SkillsHouse partnership the Council has also worked to pilot a more flexible recruitment process through the emergency response work in 2020. This has proved successful and mirrors the planned approach of the Health and Social Care Economic Partnership.

Apprenticeships are a key programme in terms of social mobility and the Council continues to invest in these through our Levy. Since 2017, we have had 712 starts on an Apprenticeship, the vast majority at Levels 2 and 3 and predominantly for 16-24 year olds, however the Council Levy has supported provision up to Level 7 and across all ages in the workforce.

Apprenticeship promotion internally and across schools and businesses will be a key activity over the coming year, as the pandemic has resulted in a significant reduction in starts nationally and locally. The role of the wider partnership including WYCA, West Yorkshire Learning Providers, colleges, Yorkshire Universities, employer ambassadors will be critical to sustaining engagement activity and stimulating the Apprenticeship marketplace.

4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

There are no new financial and resource implications arising out of this report.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

There are no significant risks to the Council arising from the recommendations in this report.

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

There are no legal issues arising out of this report.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Improved outcomes and skills levels will improve the range and quality of opportunities available to our residents in the labour market, and their ability to contribute to society and their communities.

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

The contents of this report do not directly impact Council's own emissions from other greenhouse gasses or WYCA or national net zero ambitions. In preparing residents to access economic opportunities through acquiring relevant and in-demand qualifications, our approach will enable them to compete for the anticipated increase in "Green Jobs."

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct Community Safety implications arising out of this report.

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising out of this report.

7.5 TRADE UNION

There are no Trade Union implications for the Council arising out of this report.

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

As is noted there is significant variance between Wards in terms of employment outcomes. As is set out in the report the partnership's collective investment aims to ensure that residents have access to appropriate education, employment and skills provision with a focus on community engagement and delivery in local settings where possible.

7.7 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS (for reports to Area Committees only)

There are no implications for any specific area action plan as the partnership is developing district wide solutions.

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

As is noted the Council is implementing an employment placement programmes for young people leaving care. Officers and partners need to consider impact of this pilot, as well as the wider participation and outcomes of Looked After Children/Care Leavers.

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

No data protection or information security matters arising from the report.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

None.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Board considers the information presented in this report, and synergies with other partnership updates received by the Board;
- (2) the Board endorses the approach taken to date and promotes the work of the Employment and Skills Partnership through their own organisations and networks, and considers opportunities to support different interventions and placement types;
- (3) an update to the Board is received on the Health and Social Care Integrated Workforce Strategy; and
- (4) member organisations engage with SkillsHouse to open up opportunities for young people in line with the six strands set out in section 3.3.

11. APPENDICES

None

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- [Bradford District Workforce Development Plan](#)
- [Bradford District Economic Recovery Plan](#)