

# **ADULT LEARNING AND SKILLS STRATEGY FRAMEWORK**

for

## **Cambridgeshire**

### **Executive Summary**

#### **2012-2020**

#### **1. Context and vision for skills in Cambridgeshire**

Our vision is to improve the skills of young people and adults across Cambridgeshire so that we can support a fairer society and make a productive contribution on a competitive world stage.

We will have been successful by 2020 if we have:

- improved skills (both qualification and employability);
- increased productivity and therefore competitiveness;
- enhanced wage and income levels;
- enhanced the area's attractiveness for inward investment;
- provided greater social equality and helped more people benefit from the growing economy; and
- reduced benefit and social service costs and lowered the demand for services and the need for social care dependency.

#### **2. Where we are now and challenges for the future**

The county's performance in improving skills to meet the needs of business improved before the recession and this has demonstrated an ability which we can build on. The percentage of the working population with various qualification levels increased and this needs to be accelerated to improve Cambridgeshire's competitive position in the global economy.

Alongside this, since the recession and subsequent cuts in publicly funded programmes linked to skills, a number of indicators point to future concerns.

### **Skills and participation in education, employment and/or training (EET)**

With the recession, youth unemployment has increased and there will be a proportion of young people coming through with little or no qualifications at the age of 19.

We know that individuals with low skills levels are limited in their employment opportunities, which in turn limit income levels. Low skills are linked with poor health, crime and low social cohesion and also impact on the productivity and competitiveness of business and local economies.

The Raising the Participation Age legislation requires a focus on increasing opportunities for employment with training for young people. In order to raise participation and improve the skills of young people to meet the demands of the local economy, it will be necessary to work with employers and providers to convert jobs without training into jobs with training, focusing particularly on apprenticeships wherever possible.

The County Council has set itself a target of supporting the generation of 1000 apprentices in the next year.

The key to raising participation and meeting the demands of the local economy will be having appropriate levels of provision in place that are flexible, to meet the needs of learners and employers.

Although having generally high levels of skills, Cambridgeshire also demonstrates some of the **highest levels of skills inequalities** with pockets of skills deprivation evident in a number of communities. Failure to invest in skills will increase demand for public services, adding increasing pressure to already tight budgets.

### **Knowledge and accountabilities for skills within Cambridgeshire County Council**

Some of the difficulties in developing knowledge of, and accountability for, skills have been acknowledged in the strategy as a lack of data and a lack of coherent external and internal leadership.

There has been considerable progress in this area as the strategy has developed and internal structures and external leadership from the LEP has begun to change and develop.

The implementation of the apprenticeship and child poverty strategies has given a focus to take actions forward and has strengthened the leadership role of the Council in working with partners.

### **Future key sectors for growth and their skills requirements:**

***The Cambridgeshire Skills Priority Statement for 2011/12 identified the following priority sectors and technologies as key to the county's growth:***

Research and Development, software consultancy, high value manufacturing, lower value manufacturing particularly food processing, health, digital technology and digital content industries and construction are all key sectors that are predicted to remain important or increase their share of employment over the medium term. Building entrepreneurship skills would also provide a major boost to the economy, particularly in more rural areas.

***Key areas of unmet demand articulated by employers and aligned with National Skills Audit priorities are:***

Specific management and technical skills related to ICT and the digital economy; skilled manual workers; low carbon building skills specifically targeted at small companies; ESOL provision; intermediate technical and engineering skills; targeted operational and management training for SMEs in the manufacturing sector; social workers and social care workers.

These align with many of the categories of skills priority identified by the National Skills Audit (2010), and are reinforced by the skills being sought for current vacancies available through Jobcentre Plus.

***The projected replacement and expansion demand by sector and occupations, including skills gaps and progression needs, identified in the Skills Priority Statement are:***

Professional occupations, managers and senior officials, caring personal service and associate technical and professional occupations have the highest projected replacement and expansion demand over the next five years. The engineering and health sectors also have high projected replacement demand in Cambridgeshire. Expansion demand is anticipated in business services, health, advanced manufacturing, tourism, digital content and clean technologies.

**Supply of Skills**

The skills landscape is complex with a vast number of providers competing to meet demand:

Training is provided by a mixture of state funded institutions such as schools, local authority adult learning providers and FE colleges, private sector training providers, in-house employer training and third sector providers. There is a need to ensure the provision coherently meets the needs of businesses, employers and communities.

***The following priorities and key actions will form the basis of an action plan to take forward the development of the strategy across Cambridgeshire***

**PRIORITY ONE: Improve individual aspirations and skills across Cambridgeshire so our young people and adults can succeed in the labour market.**

**Key actions for 2012/13 and beyond**

Use data and local knowledge to help support schools and colleges to understand the local employment and skills market.

Consult communities and local employers about their Training and Skills needs.

Engage learners through partnership working, give appropriate careers advice, ensure that apprenticeship opportunities are available and supported and result in employment.

Help all adults who receive social care to have a clear personal budget and wherever possible, to receive it as a direct payment enabling personal choice in skills development.

Identify young people at risk or not achieving, focus support and ensure appropriate provision is in place to achieve and progress into work or continuing education.

In the long term, ensure by undertaking needs analyses that local needs are met and that duplication and gaps are avoided.

Intervene effectively so that workless and vulnerable families with young children can access the learning and advice services that they need.

**PRIORITY TWO: Make sure future employees know what employers are looking for**

**Key actions for 2012/13 and beyond**

Targeted work with workless families and individuals will include Adult Learning and Skills and Children and Young Peoples Services engaged in working to support workless families. We will develop clear pathways to employment and progression for workless and low-income parents in poverty by:

- Working with workless parents of two year olds receiving the free entitlement, to help them into employment by the time their children reach 5 years old.
- Working with the successful bidders to the European Social Fund (ESF) programme for families with multiple problems, to ensure that the right families receive the right support at the right time in order to move into employment.
- Offering progression-oriented community learning opportunities for parents, particularly targeted in the county's disadvantaged communities.

The Adult Learning and Skills Board will engage with employers and broaden its remit to include a greater skills for employment focus:

- Use our data and knowledge to help schools to understand the local employment and skills market.
- Engage more disaffected learners by working with third sector partners on engagement strategies for local learners.
- Work with providers to encourage them to support equality, fairness and social mobility during an economic period where the vulnerable are more at risk. Adult Learning and Skills will engage a broader range of providers, particularly voluntary sector organisations that can give access to the more disengaged learners.

Adult Learning and Skills has a facilitating and enabling role as well as being a deliverer of provision. As a deliverer it is strategically placed to be a preferred provider such as in Family learning and ALDD (Adults with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities), providing a good quality service to those who are most vulnerable or at risk.

**PRIORITY THREE: Improve the responsiveness of providers to labour market needs so that provision and learners' skills acquisition are well aligned, particularly for our vulnerable groups.**

**Key actions for 2012/13 and beyond**

Work with partners to match schools and skills provision with local business needs and employment opportunities, so that the workforce – particularly the excluded and low attainers – have the skills to compete in the labour market. Use our data and knowledge to help schools and colleges to understand the local employment and skills market.

Promote ways of working with local employers to schools and academies. Support and encourage the local business community to play a role in shaping and/or delivering elements of learning in schools to better meet local business needs.

Showcase existing best practice in school/employer partnerships, encouraging and facilitating proliferation of best practice to other areas:

- Working with schools and partners, promote existing educational resources with employers, in particular the vocational skills facilities.
- Use existing partnerships for facilitation, in particular, LEP, Adult Learning and Skills Board 14-19 Educational partnerships.

Connect businesses to local employment and skills programmes, such that there is an incentive to do so as an investment in the workforce, as much as a Corporate Social Responsibility activity:

- Work with 3rd sector providers of key employment programmes such as the Prince's Trust, and Work Programme providers to promote and improve engagement.

Contribute to the Government agenda regarding the increased participation in apprenticeship programmes within the county by:

- Adopting a policy of apprenticeships being a preferred route of progression and a considered route of recruitment within the Local Authority Workforce Development Strategy within the County Council Integrated Plan.
- Advocating, through supply chain procurement and influence, the methodology of employing apprentices to develop the skills base of the local economy.
- Working closely with our partners in the LEP, we want to see new and existing businesses expanding and growing, to increase employment opportunities in the county.

Compile information for schools on the labour market and economic makeup of local areas, using the Local Economic Assessment, forecasting data, evidence from the local business community etc

Support the development of Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATA) and other mechanisms in the county to provide enhanced opportunities for SME to take up apprenticeships.

**PRIORITY FOUR: Support and enable partners, businesses and employers to improve skills across Cambridgeshire.**

**Key actions for 2012/13 and beyond**

Ensure that economic development activity is linked to improving skills in the area, promoting social mobility and addressing inequality.

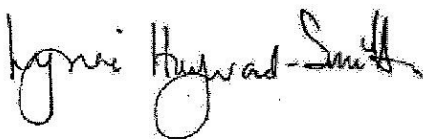
'Proof' inward investments and economic developments (e.g. Alconbury Enterprise Zone) for their contribution to the wider socio-economic agenda (e.g through procurement, local recruitment and skills contributions).

**A dialogue and joint action with partners, businesses and employers is key to the successful delivery of this strategy and we will work closely with all partners to improve outcomes across Cambridgeshire. We would welcome feedback and any suggestions for the way forward.**

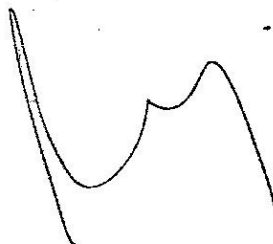
**Please send any comments and feedback to:**

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