

**Aspire, Achieve, Include:**

**The Kirklees Post-16 Employment and Skills Plan  
2022-2025**

# Foreword

Our economy is changing rapidly, this poses both challenges and opportunities for Kirklees. Making sure that people have the skills to get a job and progress in work and employers have people with the right skills they need for growth is a key priority.

As employers grapple with Skills shortages and inability to recruit, residents are facing challenges around exclusion and loneliness. The solution lies in sustained and significant investment in skills, at all levels, underpinned by aspiration, achievement and inclusion.

We need an approach that is sufficiently nimble to successfully respond to local needs with a focus on outcomes and impact. We recognise that we cannot operate in isolation and that creating the conditions for local growth requires intense collaboration across the public, private and third sector.

'Aspire, Achieve, Include' is the 2022-2025 Post-16 Employment and Skills Plan for Kirklees. It explains how the council, working closely with partners across the borough, will support and invest in the local employment and skills system over the next three years.

It will ensure we are well placed to support the Mayoral Combined Authority with the delivery of its Employment and Skills related Mayoral pledges and maximise the opportunities arising from the UK Government's Levelling up White paper and its ambition to put local employers at the heart of skills provision.

The plan proposes a series of new partnership-based actions, and a new Collaborative approach to oversee the delivery of those actions. It provides an agreed list of actions and priorities, the details and delivery of which will then be worked on by local stakeholders.

Aspire, Achieve and Include does not exist in isolation, it sits alongside and builds upon the Our Kirklees Future Learning Strategy and Kirklees Economic Strategy and will work alongside the forthcoming employer lead Local Skills and Improvement Plan.

It is the key link between these key long term strategies allowing Kirklees to harness the economic benefits from the quality of learning Kirklees Futures will deliver and ensuring the Skilled and Ambitious people strand of the Kirklees Economic strategy is achieved.

It seeks to tackle not only issues brought forward as a result of the Covid 19 Pandemic but also lay the foundations for future success in our key sectors .

Improving residents' skills and careers, whilst being clear about our role and the role of our partners will be critical to our success.

# Introduction

'Aspire, Achieve, Include' is the 2022-2025 Post-16 Employment and Skills Plan for Kirklees. It explains how the council, working closely with partners across the borough, will support and invest in the local employment and skills system over the next three years. It will contribute to the delivery and achievement of the Council Plan – in particular, the 'sustainable economy' and 'aspire and achieve' themes – and will play an important part in our ambitions for economic growth. It will also help us to maximise the opportunities arising from devolution, both in terms of increased local investment and the co-design of government programmes.

The plan draws on feedback from over 250 local businesses and education providers. It proposes a series of new partnership-based actions, a new commission to oversee the delivery of those actions and explains how we will measure success.

**Aspire:** we want our young people and adults to aim high, to be proud of where they're from and to take advantage of the many opportunities that exist in Kirklees, both now and in the future. We will ensure that the necessary learning pathways, wraparound support and opportunities to experience the world of work are in place to help them do that.

**Achieve:** we want Kirklees to be a place where everyone can fulfil their potential in education, in work and in life. This means making good quality learning available to everyone, supporting people to progress or to retrain, and working with our businesses to invest in the development of the local workforce.

**Include:** as our local economy grows and evolves, a wide range of new jobs and careers will become available, many of which don't yet even exist. We are committed to ensuring that local people are in the best place to take advantage of these opportunities, regardless of their background or starting point.

# The Local Context

Kirklees is a great place to live, learn and work. We have three high performing colleges, a world-class university and renowned innovation and training assets such as the 3M Buckley Innovation Centre and the Textiles Centre of Excellence. GCSE and A-level results have been improving, high proportions of our learners progress into higher education and apprenticeship participation rates have historically been strong.

<b>University of Huddersfield</b>	20,000 students
	Work experience opportunities for all undergraduates
	Best University Employability Strategy Award 2021
	Queen's Award for Enterprise for International Trade, and Queen's Anniversary Prizes for the Centre for Precision Technologies and the Institute of Railway Research
<b>Greenhead College</b>	In the top three designated sixth form colleges in the country based on A-level results.
<b>Huddersfield New College</b>	Ranked number one in England for equality and diversity
<b>Kirklees College</b>	Links to over 1,000 businesses
	In the top ten colleges in England for apprenticeships

Our diverse business base includes world-renowned textiles manufacturers, precision engineering firms and a fast-growing creative sector. In fact, web design is now the area's leading export. Evidence gathered in 2021 shows that most local businesses intend to grow or stay the same size over the next three years (only 4% expect to reduce their headcount) and many tell us they are interested in working with the education sector to help ensure that Kirklees has the right talent pipeline for the years ahead.

Kirklees is an attractive location for inward investment, with a strategic location and a competitive labour market that is well placed to build on the skills of the workforce and graduate talent. But we also have a number of important learning, skills and employment challenges that require a concerted, partnership-based effort if they are to be addressed. For example:

- Too many jobs in Kirklees still pay below the Real Living Wage.
- An above average proportion of jobs in Kirklees are, or will be, at risk of automation.
- Local employers continue to voice concerns about the technical and employability skills of the young people and adults that apply for vacancies.
- A below average proportion of our young people achieve good GCSE grades in English and Maths, which can impact on their employment and earning potential as adults.
- Black and minority ethnic groups are more likely to be in less secure, low wage jobs that will be most at risk.

Before COVID-19, more local people were achieving higher level qualifications while the number of people without the basic skills needed for employment was falling. We are committed to getting back on that trajectory as soon as possible and to closing the gaps between Kirklees and the rest of the country. At the time of writing, 34% of our working age residents are qualified to Level 4 – an impressive improvement on the 2016 figure of 29%, but still some way below the national figure of 43%. We also need to reduce the number of working age adults without any formal qualifications (currently 9% in Kirklees compared with an England average of 6%) and increase the number of people qualified to at least Level 2 (currently 74% in Kirklees against an England average of 78%).

Unemployment in Kirklees has been low in recent years, but COVID-19 has affected the types of jobs that are available and the capacity of Kirklees businesses to invest in training for some time to come. With some sectors reporting high numbers of hard-to-fill vacancies, it is essential that we support local people to develop the skills and attributes they need to thrive, whether that means helping them to return to the labour market after a period of unemployment, brokering apprenticeship opportunities or supporting them to achieve higher level qualifications.

COVID-19 has also accelerated the rate at which employers (and society as a whole) have become more reliant on digital skills and interaction. While many of us take this for granted, for some it is a significant barrier to employment or progression. A Kirklees-wide commitment to digital inclusion for all is therefore very much within our plans.

This skills and employment plan celebrates our past, acknowledges the challenges of the present but, most importantly, looks boldly ahead to a bright future. It is structured around four priority areas:

- Empowering our Young People
- Digital Inclusion
- Supporting our Communities to Learn and Progress
- Skills for the Future

Each of the priority areas includes actions that are designed to augment and complement the great work taking place every day in education and training providers across Kirklees. Together with Kirklees Futures and the forthcoming Local Skills Improvement Plan, they will help us achieve our vision for Kirklees: where aspiration, achievement and inclusion are the norm.

# Empowering our Young People

The actions in this priority area are designed to help the young people of Kirklees – regardless of their personal circumstances or background – find good quality employment and progress in work.

The pandemic has accentuated local inequalities and has affected the employment prospects of some young people in Kirklees (10% of local employers say it is ‘very likely’ they will recruit an apprentice over the next two years, compared with 17% who employ one now). We also know that young people without good qualifications in English and maths can find it much harder to access employment opportunities and apprenticeships, or to progress once in employment, and can become drawn into a low skill/low wage equilibrium.

We must therefore take a partnership-based approach to creating an inclusive jobs market for young people in Kirklees, building on our existing offer that includes Works Better 15-25 and borough-wide provision from C&K Careers. The actions below are an important part of that and sit alongside those proposed under ‘Supporting Our Communities to Learn and Progress’.

## We will continue to:

Help young people find and secure the apprenticeships they want.	<b>Why?</b> Apprenticeships provide excellent career pathways and help develop core competencies for work and life.
Ensure that good quality pre-apprenticeship provision is available in Kirklees and that the additional capacity made available.	<b>Why?</b> Many young people need a stepping stone, in the form of pre-apprenticeship provision, to progress into the industry of their choice. This is particularly the case at a time when the job market is more challenging and the risks of higher youth unemployment have risen.



**We will also:**

<p>Make it easier for local employers to recruit apprentices at all levels, from intermediate to degree.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> It is not always easy for employers to recruit apprentices and there is evidence that higher and degree level apprenticeships don't yet have the profile they deserve.</p>
<p>Ensure that young people in Kirklees have access to meaningful, high quality employer encounters involving real-life assignments and ongoing assessment.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Meaningful employer encounters improve young people's knowledge of jobs and careers, develop enterprise and work readiness skills and increase earning potential. They also significantly reduce the risk of young people becoming unemployed.</p>
<p>Work with local employers to identify the work readiness and employability attributes that are most important to them. These will then be shared across the full spectrum of education providers and employment support agencies.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Having the right work readiness and employability skills is essential, especially for young people entering the labour market for the first time. Only half of our local employers say the work readiness of new starters is good or better, so there is still work to do on this topic.</p>
<p>Support young people who do not achieve good GCSEs in maths and English at Key Stage 4 to achieve those qualifications by age 19 (this is a long-term action that will continue beyond the life of this strategy).</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Achieving at least GCSE grade 4/C in English and maths is linked to better further and higher education opportunities, employment prospects, earning potential and health. It is therefore essential that young people in Kirklees are given high quality post-compulsory support to achieve at this level by age 19.</p>
<p>Support young people to progress to higher education, including degree apprenticeships, preparing them for the higher skilled jobs in great demand including those in health, care and digital.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Achieving degree-level qualifications and above will empower young people to access higher level jobs, achieve higher earnings and meet local skills needs from employers.</p>

Develop practical actions to improve graduate utilisation by businesses in Kirklees . Enabling more graduates to achieve career success in Kirklees.

**Why ?** For university towns, retaining the students that have studied there after graduation means adding talented young minds into the local workforce. This in turn will address high level skills shortages and improve productivity .

# Digital Inclusion

Employers in Kirklees tell us that skills gaps in IT and digital competencies are more prominent than any other type of skills gap, impacting on both competitiveness and growth. Around half the workforce does not have the right digital skills, despite digital technology having transformed nearly every aspect of modern life. While many of us now take digital skills and digital confidence for granted, for some it remains a very daunting area.

Demand for digital skills at all levels – from introductory to higher level – is increasing and has been accelerated by the pandemic. It is now estimated that 95% of jobs will need some level of digital skills in the future. As such, it is important that our people and our businesses can access and develop the right digital skills for modern life and work and that we take the necessary steps to remove digital skills as a barrier to employment, progression and productivity.

We will do this as an active member of the West Yorkshire Local Digital Skills Partnership as well as providing accessible support and interventions that are tailored to the specific needs of Kirklees residents and businesses.

## We will continue to:

Implement Kirklees Council's Digital Work Forward Programme, through which we will improve digital training facilities, develop a new digital skills strategy and develop a Young Digital Citizen model.	<b>Why?</b> Digital skills will play an important role in the post-pandemic reshaping of the Kirklees economy. A programme of work dedicated to improving the digital skills of our citizens is therefore very important.
Provide Digital Hubs and Digital Champions, helping more residents to improve their digital confidence and access digital services in a safe and secure way.	<b>Why?</b> Improved digital confidence can help people to better manage their money, health, housing and more. It also makes them more employable (which in turn benefits our businesses), helps them to feel more independent and be less isolated.

**We will also:**

<p>Support SMEs in Kirklees to improve their digital productivity, from everyday digital competencies and selling online, to more advanced digital skills, using the cloud and back office functions.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Digital technology offers fantastic opportunities for growth and diversification. But smaller businesses can be vulnerable to digital change and it is therefore important they are supported to help take advantage of the opportunities that are available.</p>
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<p>Promote and encourage the take-up of free-to-access digital skills qualifications via the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Evidence consistently points to the growing importance of digital skills for employment and progression. The Lifetime Skills Guarantee enables people to access digital qualifications at all levels up to and including Level 3.</p>
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<p>Promote higher level digital skills access including Digital Boot Camps and digital degrees via the University of Huddersfield</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> We need more young people, especially females and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to see the attraction of digital roles and to see routes for them to secure the skills needed to secure the many opportunities available.</p>
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# Supporting Our Communities to Learn and Progress

Kirklees has a high quality employment and skills offer that engages residents from disadvantaged groups and reconnects them with the labour market. The offer includes the suite of Works Better programmes, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision, Adult and Community Learning (Rated 'Good' by Ofsted in 2019) and is supported by effective pre-engagement activity through First Steps.

Whilst participation in adult and community learning fell by almost a half nationally during the COVID-19 lockdowns, Kirklees recorded an increase. Provision was quickly refocussed to help with home schooling, with mental health and wellbeing, and to support people that had become unemployed as a result of the pandemic.

The University of Huddersfield attracts a high proportion of commuter students who live at home and travel in from the local area. Nearly half of the students are from ethnic minorities, while 57% are first generation students.

The foundations for an expanded employment and skills offer in Kirklees are therefore strong. We are well placed to support more local people of all ages, characteristics and backgrounds, be it to re-engage with learning, to improve their confidence and work readiness, to progress in work or to develop the new skills needed for a change of direction.

We know that this kind of provision has a multitude of benefits for learners and for the economy. It can improve health and wellbeing, raise aspirations and achievement and make people more employable. It can also increase the supply of skills to support our key sectors, reduce the number of residents without any formal qualifications and increase the number qualified to higher levels.

Working with partners across the West Yorkshire Combined Authority area, we are therefore committed to Kirklees being seen as a recognised place of excellence for employment and skills.

**We will continue to:**

<p>Work closely with colleagues at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to ensure that activity commissioned through the devolved Adult Education Budget addresses local need in Kirklees.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> The West Yorkshire devolution deal provides more local control and accountability for adult skills delivery. This will allow us to target local priorities such as supporting the unemployed, making learning more inclusive and addressing prominent skills gaps.</p>
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<p>Expand the offer of support for people that have been out of work for a long time, young people that are unemployed and older unemployed residents, to help them progress towards and into employment, including self-employment.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> The longer people are out of work, the harder it can be to find employment. For young people, this can mean reduced life chances in the future, while over 50s are almost three times more likely to be long-term unemployed than other age groups.</p>
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<p>Maintain a high quality ESOL offer, delivered in safe, supportive environments and covering the real-world English skills that local employers expect.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> A good grasp of the English language can improve communication skills and job opportunities. Students on ESOL courses can gain real-world experience and enterprise skills that help them successfully engage with the world and people around them.</p>
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**We will also:**

<p>Seek further funding to expand the adult and community learning offer in Kirklees, aligning with local employer need and increasing participation amongst under-represented groups.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> It is important that we reduce the number of people in Kirklees without formal qualifications and increase the number qualified to at least Level 2. An expanded adult and community learning offer is a</p>
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	key mechanism through which we can achieve that.
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<p>Enable access to good quality training and progression programmes in numeracy and literacy for people whose skills in these areas prevent them from securing the job or career they would like.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> People without basic numeracy and literacy skills are twice as likely to be unemployed. Where local people in Kirklees are struggling to find work because of their numeracy and literacy, they should have access to the right training to help them overcome that challenge.</p>
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<p>Stimulate the development of intermediate and higher level skills through a range of routes including apprenticeships, higher education, employer investment and the Lifelong Loan Entitlement.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Higher level skills drive up productivity and carry a wage premium. We need more people in Kirklees with higher level skills, but to achieve that they must be able to learn in a flexible way. The Lifelong Loan Entitlement gives them the opportunity to do that.</p>
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## Skills for the Future

We know that different industry sectors will recover from the effects of the pandemic at different rates. Construction, IT, professional services and green technologies are likely to show strong growth. Health and social care sector remains a priority and will continue to employ a large number of local people (the new National Health Innovation Campus in Huddersfield is a flagship opportunity to grow the health sector). Other sectors have been harder hit and will take longer to recover, giving the potential for an increase in the number of insecure, low-paid jobs.

Approximately one third of all working time in Kirklees is spent on tasks that are at high risk of automation, which is more than across England as a whole. This risk is particularly pronounced in lower skilled occupations and in manufacturing, both of which are heavily represented in our local economy. Kirklees also has a concentration of migration-sensitive production roles which may see higher levels of churn as the effects of Brexit unfold.

Most companies recognise the importance of improving leadership, management and innovation skills to remain competitive in global markets, yet very few have a skills plan, particularly smaller companies. It is important that we have high quality provision available with support from government, including Help to Grow for SMEs, to ensure our local leaders are well prepared and aware of the importance of investing in the workforce.

These are significant challenges. But with challenge comes opportunity and we are committed to ensuring that our people can obtain the skills and attributes they need to succeed and thrive. How we will do that is explained below.



**We will continue to:**

<p>Build on the success of national and regional reskilling initiatives by supporting Kirklees residents to acquire important transferable skills that are valued by employers across a range of industries.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> COVID, automation and Brexit will mean that some of our residents need to change job and work in different industry sectors. Employers tell us that transferable skills such as communication, teamworking and numeracy are very important to them, in many cases more so than job-specific or technical skills.</p>
<p>Work with employers to make it easier for them to understand the local training offer, provide apprenticeship opportunities for staff of all ages, invest in workforce development and raise job quality.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Less than half of local employers say they 'definitely' know where to find information about local training and that they find it easy to understand.</p>
<p>Take forward plans for a new construction skills training facility, linked to the Council's capital investment programme, the Transpennine Route Upgrade rail improvements and significant residential housing developments planned in North Kirklees. The facility will include on-site working and will be delivered in conjunction with employers.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Kirklees (and the wider region) has a shortage of skilled construction workers, especially given our ambitious capital programme. The new facility will provide a talent pipeline, raise awareness of the wide range of careers in construction, increase apprenticeship numbers and enable us to leverage more social value from large capital schemes.</p>

**We will also:**

<p>Support individuals and businesses to develop 'green skills'<sup>1</sup> and to take advantage of opportunities associated with green industry.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> The council has a vision to make Kirklees carbon neutral by 2038 and there is a Combined Authority mayoral pledge to build 5,000 sustainable homes. Achieving this will require a significant growth in 'green skills' and much wider use of green technologies.</p>
<p>Work with the Kirklees Top 100 Companies and those sectors experiencing significant local recruitment and retention challenges to help ensure that career opportunities are widely promoted and understood, that they are available to local people and that we address outdated perceptions about working in those sectors.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Some of our largest employing sectors are facing a recruitment and retention crisis. Health and care, for example, suffers from misunderstandings about the nature of the work, high turnover and a mass of unfilled vacancies (amidst ever growing demand). Working collaboratively across the education and skills system to address this has never been more important.</p>
<p>Help people to develop the enterprise and leadership skills they need to become high quality employers and leaders, and to start and grow new businesses in Kirklees.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> Enterprise skills and an entrepreneurial spirit are central to the growth of our economy and to the progression of our people into positions of leadership and management. We must ensure these qualities are well embedded across our area.</p>
<p>Ensure that Kirklees residents can benefit as much as possible from West Yorkshire-wide employment and skills offers in adult re-training, careers, school engagement, business support and start-up provision.</p>	<p><b>Why?</b> There is a strong and varied employment and skills offer in West Yorkshire, with evident efficiencies and savings to be had in the local deployment of those elements that will most benefit Kirklees residents.</p>

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as the knowledge, abilities, values and attitudes needed to live in, develop and support a sustainable and resource-efficient society.

# Summary of Actions

<b>Empowering our Young People</b> <b>We will:</b>	<b>Digital Inclusion</b> <b>We will:</b>	<b>Supporting our Communities to Learn and Progress</b> <b>We will:</b>	<b>Skills for the Future</b> <b>We will:</b>
<p>Help young people find and secure the apprenticeships they want.</p>	<p>Implement Kirklees Council's Digital Work Forward Programme, improving digital training facilities, developing a new digital skills strategy and developing a Young Digital Citizen model.</p>	<p>Work closely with colleagues at the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to ensure that activity commissioned through the devolved Adult Education Budget addresses local need in Kirklees.</p>	<p>Build on the success of national and regional reskilling initiatives by supporting Kirklees residents to acquire important transferable skills that are valued by employers across a range of industries.</p>
<p>Ensure that good quality pre-apprenticeship provision is available and that the additional capacity made available through Kickstart is continued.</p>	<p>Provide Digital Hubs and Digital Champions, helping more residents to improve their digital confidence and access digital services in a safe and secure way.</p>	<p>Expand the offer of support for people that have been out of work for a long time, young people that are unemployed and older unemployed residents.</p>	<p>Work with employers to make it easier for them to understand the local training offer and to invest in workforce development.</p>
<p>Make it easier for local employers to recruit apprentices at all levels, from intermediate to degree.</p>	<p>Support SMEs in Kirklees to improve their digital productivity, from everyday digital competencies and selling online, to more advanced digital skills, using the cloud and back office functions.</p>	<p>Maintain a high quality ESOL offer, delivered in safe, supportive environments and covering skills that employers expect.</p>	<p>Take forward plans for a new construction skills training facility, linked to the Council's capital investment programme, rail improvements and residential housing developments.</p>
<p>Ensure that young people in Kirklees have access to meaningful, high quality employer encounters involving real-life assignments and ongoing assessment.</p>	<p>Promote and encourage the take-up of free-to-access digital skills qualifications via the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.</p>	<p>Seek further funding to expand the adult and community learning offer in Kirklees, aligning with local employer need and increasing participation amongst under-represented groups.</p>	<p>Support individuals and businesses to develop 'green skills' and to take advantage of opportunities associated with green industry.</p>
<p>Work with local employers to identify the work readiness and employability attributes that are most important to them.</p>	<p>Promote higher level digital skills access including Digital Boot Camps and digital degrees via the University of Huddersfield.</p>	<p>Enable access to good quality training and progression programmes in numeracy and literacy.</p>	<p>Work with the Kirklees Top 100 Companies and those sectors experiencing significant local recruitment and retention challenges to help ensure that</p>

			career opportunities are widely promoted and understood.
Support young people who do not achieve good GCSEs in maths and English at Key Stage 4 to achieve those qualifications by age 19.		Stimulate the development of intermediate and higher level skills through a range of routes including apprenticeships, employer investment and the Lifelong Loan Entitlement.	Help people to develop the enterprise skills they need to become high quality employers and leaders, and to start and grow new businesses in Kirklees.
Support young people to progress to higher education, including degree apprenticeships, preparing them for the higher skilled jobs in great demand.			Ensure that Kirklees residents can benefit as much as possible from West Yorkshire-wide employment and skills offers in adult re-training, careers, school engagement, business support and start-up provision.
Develop practical actions to improve graduate utilisation by businesses in Kirklees . Enabling more graduates to achieve career success in Kirklees			

# Delivering the Employment and Skills Plan

A new Employment and Skills Commission will be established to oversee the delivery of this plan. The Commission will have representation from further and higher education, work-based learning, employers from sectors of local strategic significance, business representative organisations, the voluntary sector, the local authority and local government agencies.

Meeting on a quarterly basis, the Employment and Skills Commission will consider the sustainability of the actions in this strategy, especially those supported by short-term funding.

## **Measures:**

1. Reduction in the proportion of working age adults with no formal qualifications.
2. Increase in the proportion of working age adults qualified to at least Level 2.
3. Increase in the proportion of working age adults qualified to at least Level 4.
4. Increase in the number of learning completing digital skills courses.
5. Unemployment in Kirklees, including youth unemployment and long-term unemployment, is below the national average.
6. Year-on-year increase in the number of people starting and completing Apprenticeships in Kirklees, including Higher and Degree Apprenticeships.
7. Employers report improved work readiness skills amongst new starters.
8. Increase in the proportion of young people from Kirklees entering higher education.

## **Back cover**

Contact details etc.