



REPORT TO THE NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD
15 NOVEMBER, 2019

TITLE: *North Wales Skills and Employment Plan 2019-2022*
AUTHOR: *David Roberts, Chair of North Wales Regional Skills Partnership*
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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. The North Wales Skills and Employment Plan 2019-2022 (included in **Appendix 1**) has been developed to inform Welsh Government's strategic approach to the delivery of skills and employment provision in the region.
- 1.2. It has been produced by the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership after consultations with regional stakeholders, providers, and industry from April – July 2019.

2. DECISION SOUGHT

- 2.1. **To endorse the regional Skills and Employment Plan and the three priorities as set out in the plan.**

3. REASONS FOR THE DECISION

- 3.1. To report to the North Wales Economic ambition Board on the Regional Skills and Employment Plan.

4. BACKGROUND AND RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

4.1. Purpose and Approach

- 4.1.1 The North Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) has been given a key role by Welsh Government in their mission to help break the cycle of low skills, low wages and low productivity. The RSP's role is to identify skills gaps and skills shortages in the region by better understanding the opportunities and investment pipelines and drawing on intelligence of regional employers and stakeholders.
- 4.1.2 The Regional Skills Partnership receives an annual contract and funding from Welsh Government to undertake specific tasks and work packages. The RSP is contracted to deliver a regional employment and skills plan to Welsh Government as well as a regional outline plan template which recommends increases or decreases in skills provision for post 16 Further Education and Work Based Learning in line with data and labour market intelligence. The contract schedule from Welsh Government also contains requirements for the RSP to maintain regional skills observatory, develop employer networks, work closely with Enterprise Zones and hold regional skills summits to disseminate their regional recommendations and outcomes.

- 4.1.3 For 2019-20, the RSP has been tasked by Welsh Government to produce a 3 year Regional Employment Plan. The RSP team have been working with employers and regional stakeholders/providers over the summer. In developing the plan, the RSP carried out a comprehensive review of economic and policy context, analysis of labour market intelligence along with primary intelligence, which was mainly gathered through our North Wales Employer Skills Survey. The survey was completed by 238 businesses across all sectors in the region.
- 4.1.4 To further bolster our survey responses, we held focus groups, workshops and one to one meetings with employers from across our sectors. Over 350 businesses from across the region took part in the consultation process and helped shape the priorities of the plan.
- 4.1.5. Following this period of consultation, the Skills and Employment plan for the region was submitted to Welsh Government for approval and was endorsed and adopted at the Regional Skills Partnership meeting at the end of September.
- 4.1.6. We recently received approval for the Skills Plan from Welsh Government and Minister Ken Skates will be launching the plan at our Skills Summit on 28th November, 2019.

4.2. Overview of the Plan

- 4.2.1 The plan gives an overview of our economy, labour market and skills landscape as it currently stands, and addresses some of the key challenges that the region will need to tackle in order to have a sustainable skills system.
- 4.2.2 One of the key chapters in the plan is an overview of what employers have told us are the key skills issues and challenges for their businesses and the region as a whole. The data and information that we received and analysed showed that recruitment is the biggest challenge facing our employers in the region, ahead of economic/financial challenges and making a profit. 71% of employers in the region are having difficulty in recruiting for specific roles and 61.1% of employers are also facing a skills gap, which has an impact for their business.
- 4.2.3 More widely, the evidence from our consultation has indicated the changing nature of the labour market and the different skills set that will be needed to satisfy employer needs. This includes:
- **Agility and Resilience** to respond to different employment opportunities and different tasks and demands within jobs as organisations become much flatter in structure;
 - **IT and Digital Skills** across all sectors and occupations in light of technological advances;
 - **STEM** skills;
 - Enterprise, **entrepreneurial** and marketing skills;
 - **Work ready** and **employability** skills, including problem solving, critical thinking and creativity.
- 4.2.4 The Plan also focuses on the 7 key and growth sectors in the region and the 'Spotlight on our Sectors' chapter. This section of the plan details the skills challenges, issues and priorities that are facing each of the sectors.

4.3 Priorities of the Plan

- 4.3.1 The last section of the plan brings together our vision, priorities and actions for the region. These priorities and recommendations will dictate the RSP's activity over the next three years. The priorities are captured in three of the most pertinent themes identified throughout the Plan. Underpinning all issues and priorities is the need for more robust Labour Market Intelligence:

Priority 1 Building our Future Workforce and Attracting Talent – Building a future skills pipeline that aligns to future growth opportunities in our economy:

- Ensuring that training provision and facilities meet current and future needs of businesses, individuals and the wider economy;
- Reduce Skills shortages facing businesses in growth sectors by growing and attracting talent;
- Develop innovation skills for businesses growth.

Priority 2 Skills for an inclusive North Wales – Reduce full range of labour inequalities and improved results in terms of job access, quality and sustainability:

- How we shape programmes to help unemployed people and economically inactive adults to move into work, sustain and progress into employment;
- Forecast labour market opportunities and shape support for people to access pipeline of new job opportunities, particularly in growth sectors;
- Improve progression of low-paid workers up the career ladder.

Priority 3 Promote career perceptions, pathways and apprenticeship opportunities – Promote clearer progression routes and apprenticeship opportunities

- How we change the perceptions of our growth sectors;
- Support individuals to follow apprenticeship progression routes through provision of high quality information and guidance;
- Promotion of apprenticeship opportunities, including progression to higher-level and degree apprenticeships;
- Improve employers' awareness and access to apprenticeships.

4.4. Next Steps

- 4.4.1 The next stage for the RSP will be to develop these priorities and recommendations into a more specific and detailed action plan, which will be a shared delivery plan for the region for the next three years. The priorities articulated here will be further refined and delivered in a number of different ways, to make the most of resource capacity and partnership working.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. No request from RSP for NWEAB to finance their mainstream function, although subsequent projects may have a resource implication.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None at this stage.

7. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None at this stage.

8. IMPACT ON EQUALITIES

- 8.1. None identified.

9. CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN

- 9.1. Consultation has taken place with the Executive Officers' Group, the North Wales Business Delivery Group, the North Wales Regional Skills Partnership and employers and providers over the summer 2019.
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APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 North Wales Skills and Employment Plan 2019-22

STATUTORY OFFICERS RESPONSE:

i. Monitoring Officer – Host Authority:

“The report provides an explanation of the context of the work of the Regional Skills Partnership in preparing the Plan and the journey to adoption. I have no specific comments to add in relation to propriety.”

ii. Statutory Finance Officer (the Host Authority’s Section 151 Officer):

“I confirm that paragraphs 4.1.2 and 5.1 of the report above accurately reflect the RSP’s financial position.”