

Central Bedfordshire All Age Skills Strategy

Draft – 6 March 2012



Foreword

In an increasingly competitive world, skills have a critical role to play. Individuals require skills to enable them to secure and progress in employment; businesses need a skilled workforce to stimulate productivity, encourage competitiveness and innovation; and collectively skills are required to support the local economy to compete nationally and internationally. Here in Central Bedfordshire we believe we need to develop a strategy to deliver a flexible and mobile workforce that meets the needs of employers, is able to respond rapidly to economic shifts and will enable Central Bedfordshire to achieve its full economic potential.

The All Age Skills Strategy sets out the high level priorities and actions needed to make this happen, and critically how we need to work together. Whilst Central Bedfordshire Council has led the development of the strategy, we are doing so in partnership and recognise that all partners will need to work differently in the future.

We recognise that this strategy is not the end of the journey, we are only at the beginning. Delivering the priorities will not be easy, there are no magic answers or quick fix solutions but we believe by working differently and with businesses at the heart of what do, we can make a real difference and we relish that challenge.

For the Council the strategy has a critical role to play in delivering our medium term priorities and the Economic Development Plan (EDP) which affirms the Council's commitment to support sustainable economic growth by increasing our supply of skilled people, supporting businesses to grow and thrive and getting our residents into work. With this in mind, we have included a summary of what we as an organisation believe we can do to support the delivery of this strategy.

It only remains for me to express my sincere thanks to everyone who has given their time to developing this strategy and we look forward to working hard with you over the coming months to take it forward.

Cllr Ken Matthews

Executive Member for Sustainable Communities – Strategic Planning and Economic Development, Central Bedfordshire Council

March 2012

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“For adults, better skills and economically valuable qualifications are a route to achieving better jobs, career progression and higher incomes to support their families. Better skills are the key to greater social mobility, ensuring that individuals can get on because of their talent and hard work, and not just because of their background. For employers, a more highly-skilled workforce is a route to achieving higher productivity and, in the private sector, greater competitiveness and profitability” *World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England, July 2007*

Introduction

Skills are vital to our future and are at the heart of successfully growing the local economy to deliver sustainable growth, build stronger communities and promote social mobility. Skills are critical to employers in all sectors and a highly skilled workforce will facilitate the growth of existing businesses, increase the attractiveness of the area to inward investors, generating job creation and fuelling local economic growth. This strategy outlines how, in partnership, we will bring together the skills that businesses and the Central Bedfordshire economy need now and in the future with provision delivered by local providers that must also meet the needs of individuals and local communities. This will be achieved by:

Working Together – bringing together partners to ensure that the skills needs of employers, individuals and the growing economy are understood and met

- Build employer ownership of the skills agenda through ongoing dialogue with employers in order to promote how skills can improve competitiveness, understand employer skills needs, provide support to navigate training options and drive up the quality of provision
- Develop an effective skills partnership by bringing together an employer led skills forum

Developing the Current and Future Workforce – Increasing the proportion of the workforce with recognized skills to stimulate productivity, encourage competitiveness and innovation

- Ensure that Central Bedfordshire businesses can improve their competitiveness through investment in workforce skills by encouraging businesses to invest in upskilling their workforce through promoting examples of successful outcomes
- Promote the importance of ongoing workforce development
- Encourage training providers to respond to skills requirements of employers

Raising Individuals' Aspirations and Achievements – promote and raise awareness of the support and opportunities locally available for our residents of all ages for skills development and the importance of gaining appropriate skills in achieving their ambitions

- Support careers advice to incorporate local labour market intelligence to better equip young people and adults to make better informed decisions
- Promote the benefits of learning to individuals of all ages and promote the opportunities available through local case studies and role models
- Support the access and provision of learning opportunities that are appropriate to the needs of all
- Support the development of employability skills through training, work placements, volunteering and enterprise by encouraging local employers and educational establishments to strengthen focus on preparation for the workplace

The Challenge We Face

There is a growing acceptance that despite significant public sector investment in skills in the UK, training has too often been designed around qualifications and the needs of public funding streams rather than the needs of the UK economy and what employers believe will improve their competitiveness.

At the heart of this strategy is how partners in Central Bedfordshire integrate and work with employers to better understand their needs and help them navigate the complex skills system to meet these needs. Central Bedfordshire has an economy of £4.2B¹ with over 11,000 businesses and over £500M invested in schools and further and higher education institutions.

Effective communication between employers and partners is central to this and will strengthen the provider's position in the market for learning as they become a credible voice for employer demand, helping them compete on the basis of quality and innovation rather than volumes and funding priorities. This in turn will help improve labour market information (LMI) for Central Bedfordshire residents to support their learning choices with real-time knowledge on the skills and aptitudes that employers value. It will also support businesses to grow and innovate, individuals to improve their employment or employment prospects and grow the economy of Central Bedfordshire.

Employer ownership of skills development can only be facilitated by all partners changing the way they work. We need to build on the good practice examples where local training organisations are working closely with employers and develop better ways of listening to employers and guiding them through the available support. In most cases, this will not be the direct responsibility of Central Bedfordshire Council to deliver, but we wish to improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of this dialogue between employers and providers and ensure our residents are best placed and informed to progress in and through employment.

We do not need a new set of initiatives. Instead we need to transform the way in which the skills system works for employer-led training. We must create the space for employers to step up and work within their supply chains and business clusters, together with employees, colleges and training providers, to develop the skills they need, framed within a skills agenda which is employer, rather than government owned. Greater employer ownership means greater responsibility. We need a single market for skills development into which employers and employees are prepared to make a greater contribution for higher quality training.

UKCES, Employer Ownership of Skills: Securing a sustainable partnership for the long term, December 2011

¹ Central Bedfordshire Council Local Economic Assessment, 2011.

Whilst the focus of this strategy is upon a new approach to skills in Central Bedfordshire, the area cannot be viewed in isolation. National strategies and policies have implications on the funding available and the allocation of this, and also on the way in which the local authority and other organisations operate.

The actions set out in this strategy are in line with skills policy at a national level, reflecting some of the main drivers and recognising the impact these are already having locally. These include the need to work with employers on vocational skills, exemplified for example, by the forthcoming University Technical College in Houghton Regis; deregulation and greater freedoms for providers, including schools; following the introduction of the Academies Act in 2010 for example, the majority of schools in Central Bedfordshire have opted to become academies, with over 40% of pupils now taught in an academy; the move towards individuals and employers having to finance their own skills development; and the raising of the participation age.



“...in order to build an internationally competitive economy, the future employment and skills system will need to invest as much effort on raising employer ambition, on stimulating demand, as it does on enhancing skills supply. In this way, we can create a ‘virtuous circle’ of skills development, between the skills available and the skills required. UKCES

Ambition 2020: World Class Skills and Jobs for the UK, Wath-upon-Deerne: UK Commission for Employment and Skills, May 2009.

Locally, the All Age Skills Strategy builds on the Economic Development Plan, complements the Children and Young People’s Plan 2011-14, delivers against the Child Poverty Strategy and links with the Transport Strategy.

Developing the Strategy

The development of the strategy has been led by Central Bedfordshire Council working in partnership with a range of businesses, employer representative groups, providers, stakeholders, networks, the voluntary and community sector and individuals. In summer 2011, three workshops were held with external stakeholders. Additionally, just over 100 individuals participated in focus groups or interviews with a range of adults including people out of work, older people, low skilled and people with disabilities. Young people in years 10,11, and 12 and those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), post NEET and looked-after children were also included. Business interviews with 20 employers provided views on employability, apprenticeships and the importance of skills to businesses, particularly within the current economic climate.

The full findings are detailed in a consultation report available online at:

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/learning/adult-learning/all-age-skills-strategy.aspx>.

What we intend to do

Priority 1: Working Together

Bringing together partners to ensure that the skills needs of employers, individuals and the economy are understood and met

We have an opportunity to build on the relationships that already exist and the positive attitude and support shown for the development of the All Age Skills Strategy. We now need to take this to a new level.

Central Bedfordshire Council will look at how it works with partners and its role in meeting the priorities contained within the strategy. This is a chance for the council to develop its role as an enabler, bringing together partners to ensure that the skills needs of employers, individuals and the growing economy are understood and met, and to enhance its role as an influencer of strategy and funding. This is an opportunity, as an employer, to lead by example. The jobs and skills challenges facing Central Bedfordshire are significant, and can only be achieved by a marked change in how the council thinks and works, and how all partners work together.



We should look at the way local labour intelligence is collected and shared. We need effective integrated mechanisms for identifying the needs of both existing employers and the businesses of the future. This information needs to be shared to inform the planning of provision and to support more informed decision making. At present, although significant intelligence exists, it is not always specific, up to date, accessible or available to all providers.

It is crucial that this integrated intelligence takes into account changes in the delivery of careers advice. The introduction of a new National Careers Service, from April 2012, offers an opportunity to explore the role of labour market intelligence, how this is shared with careers advisors and the ease with which this can be interpreted. With its focus on the over 19s, there is also a challenge around how under 19s receive advice, the quality of the advice they receive through schools and how young people not in education access advice.

There is a changing national economic development landscape, in particular with the establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). LEPs have a business chair and a high level skills remit and in Central Bedfordshire Council's case, the South East Midlands LEP (SEMLEP) working across eleven neighbouring authorities is seeking to support the growth of advanced technologies and precision engineering which have high specialist skills demands. Central Bedfordshire as a key partner in SEMLEP will consider how best the LEP can help the implementation of this strategy and how the strategy might contribute across the wider geography of SEMLEP.

Areas of Activity Focus

1. Building employer ownership

More effective employer engagement is central to the improvement of skills in Central Bedfordshire. Effective on-going relationships with employers will:

- Encourage businesses to discuss their growth and skills needs and aspirations
- Provide support to find the most appropriate solution for their needs or work jointly with them to create a solution to their needs
- Improve the quality of the learning system as a whole by building on areas with good employer engagement

Two way dialogue with business will become the norm for skills providers and partners. It is essential that businesses, particularly small and medium sized enterprises, find it is easy to engage in the complex, ever changing and often confusing landscape of local provision to improve their business performance. Easy and simple is our goal.

We will promote channels for sharing this information with training providers, encouraging improved and shared working amongst provider networks to enable employer needs to be met efficiently, in turn encouraging their investment in skills and growing the market for vocational skills in Central Bedfordshire.

We will utilize existing mechanisms, such as the Central Bedfordshire Business Survey, networks and work undertaken by partners. It will be important to ensure that employers can be referred from any skills partner through developing communication and mutual trust. A key part of this process will be to segment the employer market – to understand and expect that not all businesses will wish to engage in all aspects of this process, while others may be sufficiently interested and willing to act as skills champions or strategic partners in a Central Bedfordshire learning infrastructure.

2. Develop an effective employer led skills partnership

One of the first activities will be to scope and develop an effective skills partnership by bringing together an employer led skills forum involving a range of organizations with roles in delivering the skills agenda. Leadership will be key. This will look to build on existing provider networks and partnerships, but early conversations will explore appropriate models and communication approaches.

The skills partnership will have a fundamental role to play in the implementation and evaluation of the All Age Skills Strategy. It will shape and influence the range of activities that will help achieve the strategy's ambitions. The partnership will also have a crucial role in making sure local skills needs are met. We will look at how social media can be utilized to support the partnership, facilitate the sharing of information and make it easier for skills partners to learn of opportunities.



Case Study – Chamber Futures

Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce working with the University of Bedfordshire to develop employability pathways. Aims to provide students with the appropriate personal development to ensure they are at the “front of the queue” when applying for jobs in response to local employer needs. Includes events around CV writing, marketing skills, mock interviews and self-employment.

Priority 2: Developing the Current and Future Workforce

Increasing the proportion of the workforce with recognized skills to stimulate productivity, encourage competitiveness and innovation

In order to meet the current and future needs of employers, it is essential that the workforce has the required skills and qualifications. We recognise that these skills and qualifications can be obtained in a number of ways, through academic study, vocational opportunities, work based learning and apprenticeships.

Overall, Central Bedfordshire performs well in respect of qualifications with the proportion of the resident working age population qualified to Level 4 above regional and national averages. However, this is below the benchmark level for our statistical neighbours, with some areas significantly outperforming Central Bedfordshire.



The Children and Young People's Plan highlights some of the key attainment issues for children and young people. As with skills in general, performance compares well but there is room for improvement: at Key Stage 1 performance is above the national and statistical neighbour averages, but improvements in Key Stage 2 performance have been far greater nationally than locally. While performance at Key Stage 4 is above the national average and improving, Central Bedfordshire lags its statistical neighbours.

Within Central Bedfordshire, the growth in the number of apprenticeship starts is slower than in many other local authorities. There is still significant room for improvement across both the private and public sectors in Central Bedfordshire.

The recession is having a significant impact on the amount invested in work related training with fewer than a third of employers funding off the job training in 2011 compared to 37% in 2010². SMEs are finding it particularly hard to secure the resources to invest in workforce development.

National research has shown significant discrepancies in the amount of training received by employees with different levels of qualifications. Those without a Level 2 qualification, for example, receive on average one fifth of the amount of training received by a graduate employee. With little training, the chances of progressing in employment are limited.

At the same time, research has consistently demonstrated that UK productivity would benefit most from investment in intermediate Level 3 qualifications and technical skills. Almost a quarter of employers reported skills shortages and skill gaps in the 2011 Bedfordshire and Luton Business Survey, primarily in technical, practical or job specific skills.

² Bedfordshire and Luton Business Survey

Areas of Activity Focus

1. Ensure that Central Bedfordshire businesses can improve their competitiveness through investment in workforce skills

In order to improve competitiveness, employers need to invest in the skills of their workforce. We recognise that as a skills partnership, we have to make the case to employers on the need to invest time and resources in developing the skills of their workforce, enhancing understanding of how skills can improve competitiveness and how to source high quality workforce development locally. The starting point will be to build on existing good practice employer-learning provider relationships.

2. Promote the importance of ongoing workforce development

With approximately 80% of the workforce of 2020 already having left compulsory education and as individuals now remain in the workforce longer (the number of individuals aged over 65 in the workforce has more than doubled in recent years), there is a need for a focus upon training and developing those already in employment.

With a move away from state funded training, there is a need to convince both employers and their employees of the advantages of training and the benefits of investing their own time and finances. For employers, the advantages of training could be promoted in a number of ways: through skills brokerage models, the use of business skills champions, support with workforce development planning, leadership and management support, or investigating the possibility of financial incentives for investment in training. The overriding principal should be that employers' learning needs are rooted in their business needs with a clear perspective on why any investment in training will impact on their competitiveness.

Case Study – the value of Apprenticeships

“It’s a cost effective way to grow, without placing a significant financial liability on to the business . . . it is also a good way to support a young person who wants to make more of themselves . . . it can be difficult out there for some young people and I like the idea of giving someone a chance . . .”

‘We’d say it was essential . . . essential to the growth and success of the business .

Quotes from business interviews undertaken during consultation on the strategy



As part of a coherent skills partnership approach, learning providers need to further develop closer relationships with employers and seek to encourage employer representatives on vocational curriculum boards to ensure that their courses are up-to-date and relevant to current business practice, ensure that employers offer apprenticeships, work placement opportunities and are involved in the graduation process and in alumni networking events.

For employees, there is a need to address perceptions, promoting the message that learning is a pathway to employment and income and does not cease when employment begins, articulating the advantages that can arise from up skilling, and encouraging employees to take the initiative in requesting training from their employer. Learning providers can use this to enhance their information, advice and guidance services to individual learners, on what qualifications employers' value and wider career pathway planning which links to activity under Priority 3 below.

Thought will also be given to how employers and employees are made aware of provision and the information that is available to them. This will include academically focused learning (including learning at foundation level), work based learning, apprenticeships or pre-apprenticeships. This will involve the use of appropriate labour market intelligence, and skills partnership working with provider networks and the National Careers Service.

3. Encourage training providers to respond to skills requirements of employers

As the flexibilities held by training providers increase, the local learning infrastructure must anticipate new developments in the learning market. For example, small firms have for many years struggled to access courses delivered in a traditional format and there remains a need to develop modular delivery to reach those employers. With over 85% of Central Bedfordshire Council businesses having less than 10 employees this is a critical local issue.

As more employers invest in training and see the benefits of doing so poor performance will lead the employer to stop training. It is in the interests of all providers that the quality of the training on offer is high and the messages about training are coherent and integrated.

Employers often work through trusted providers and so skills brokerages can work well when one provider manages the input of other (specialist) providers as necessary. The skills partnership will encourage more collaborative arrangements, while retaining their competitive edge and specialism. The key to successful delivery will be coherent and positive communication, flexible responses with high quality delivery.

Consideration will also be given to targeting employers in those sectors where future growth is anticipated. Again, the mechanisms for engaging with employers and identifying their particular skills needs will be crucial and embedded within skills partnership business engagement activity. This may be taken forward within the umbrella of the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Priority 3: Raising Individuals' Aspirations and Achievements

Promote and raise awareness of the support and opportunities locally available for our residents of all ages for skills development and the importance of gaining appropriate skills in achieving those ambitions

For many, skills development and training may be a low priority; this may be because they are not aware of the advantages that can accrue from training, they are unaware of the opportunities available, or due to barriers to learning.

The overall figures for Central Bedfordshire conceal a range of geographic and demographic variations in qualifications and attainment. Unsurprisingly, there is a strong correlation between qualification levels, life and employment prospects. Those with no qualifications are less likely to be in employment, whilst those with low qualification levels are likely to be concentrated in low skilled, low paid employment, if at all. The statistics also show that there are groups of young people who are less likely to perform well educationally, in particular boys, some ethnic minorities, children in care, children on free school meals and children with special educational needs.

The traditional view is that low aspirations among many young people, particularly those from more deprived backgrounds, fundamentally affect their chances in securing qualifications and then entry into further learning or employment. However, recent research suggests that while the capacity of the individual to navigate a path between education and training made a difference to the individual's ability to secure employment, a key factor in this journey was that their career aspirations were out of line with their qualifications³. Around two in five young people aspired to careers requiring higher educational qualifications than they were expected to achieve.

The importance of better information, advice and guidance that is focused on the needs and capacity of the individual learner is vital if we are to ensure effective use of the market for learning at all ages. We aim to inform aspirations at an early stage when young people still have time to meet these challenges and progress into their career of choice and as adults make better informed choices. This needs to be fully informed by an up-to-date employers' perspective but we also need to ensure that we time the interventions to make maximum effect.

Gender stereotyping of young people's occupational choices also affects skill shortages and inequality of opportunity and income. Work experience at school that deliberately sets out to challenge these stereotypes has widely been seen as a necessary first step to breaking up traditional experiences and ideas about the workplace and its demands. Without this, girls who consistently outperform boys throughout education fail to maintain this advantage in career status and pay. Again, the evidence suggests that to challenge such stereotypes early intervention is necessary from around Year 7⁴.

³ Yates, S., Harris, A., Sabates, R. and Staff, J., *Early Occupational Aspirations and Fractured Transitions: A Study of Entry into 'NEET' Status in the UK*, (Journal of Social Policy, October 2010)

⁴ Ofsted *Girls' Career Aspirations* (April 2011)

“too few adults possess the skills to succeed in tomorrow’s labour market, or the motivation, confidence and opportunity to gain them” *UK Commission for Employment and Skills. Towards Ambition 2020:skills, jobs, growth. (October 2009)*

The strategy also recognises that the barriers to learning include disability and seeks to continue supporting relevant skills development for people who are furthest from the workplace for whom a pathway towards employment can still be developed.

Areas of Activity Focus

1. Support careers advice to incorporate local labour market intelligence to better equip young people and adults to make better informed decisions

The Education Act 2011 requires schools to provide independent careers guidance to all pupils, but repealed the requirement to provide a programme of careers education. Taking into account this change, along with changes to Connexions, and the National Careers Service focus on the over 19s, careers advice needs to be an area of focus for the skills partnership. There are very clear links to the actions in Priorities 1 and 2 that aim to build employer ownership and involvement in learning in Central Bedfordshire and in such a way that this knowledge can be fully reflected in careers advice.

Recognising these changes, and the shift in the relationship with schools following the conversion of many into academies, we will work with partners, including the 14-19 Strategy Group, to influence impartial careers advice in schools, to ensure that this incorporates intelligence on current and future employment opportunities and the skills required to access these. This should include exposing young people to employers and their employment requirements and opportunities from early in their education. This information needs to be delivered sufficiently early so that young people have the tools to help them decide what they would like to do in future and the learning pathway they want to follow. The provision of information and support for other professionals who may be responsible for giving advice, particularly to young people, could be considered, for example, social workers supporting young people leaving care. This may include mentors, for example from businesses, to offer specific information, acting as role models and inspiring young people.

Attention will also be given to establishing links with the National Careers Service, National Apprenticeship Service, SEMLEP and its partners, so that everyone has access to information and advice that is relevant and incorporates labour market intelligence.

2. Promote the benefits of learning to individuals of all ages and promote the opportunities available

There is a need to showcase the benefits of learning to individuals, and to provide information, advice and guidance on the training opportunities available and the outcomes that can be expected from undertaking such training. It is essential to provide information, advice and guidance that allows all learners to make an informed choice – whether a young person wanting to choose a career or an employee wishing to switch to a more rewarding career.

We will explore collaboration opportunities with partners ensuring that we tailor our consistent messages and recognise that channels of communication, that will engage young people, may not be appropriate for those who are already employed.

All learning providers need to consider how their tutors might best respond if one of their learners asks “how do I go about getting a job in this sector?” New approaches should be considered that give tutors better tools to inform learners of pathways and career choices open to them. Recognising that people rarely will have a job for life with one employer in one sector.

We recognise that individuals may seek information, advice and guidance from a number of sources and in a number of formats. Through partnership working with children’s centres, schools, family learning and the community and voluntary sector we will ensure that learning is promoted and information, advice and guidance available to individuals of all ages. We will also explore the potential for Community Learning Champions who could act as advocates for learning locally. This activity will closely align with priorities identified within the Child Poverty strategy and DWP Get Britain Working programmes.

3. Support the access and provision of learning opportunities that are appropriate to the needs of all groups

It must be recognised that a one size fits all approach is not appropriate. A targeted, tailored approach is therefore required to meet the specific needs of groups including those with disabilities, including learning disabilities, and BME groups, including Gypsy and Traveller communities. These groups are vulnerable to exclusion in an approach focussed on growth. Additionally, given the concentration of low achievement in particular geographic areas, consideration should be given to focusing activity in these areas.

Thought also needs to be given to the accessibility of learning opportunities. The Economic Development Plan acknowledges that a lack of available and affordable transport is a barrier to accessing training opportunities, and proposes access planning through the Local Transport Plan and supporting schemes such as Wheels to Work. Furthermore, the Skills Partnership will look to ensure that skills and the accessibility of learning opportunities are taken into account in future transport planning.



Case Study – Family Learning

Delivered by Bedfordshire Adult Skills and Community Learning, Family Learning is delivered in a range of community settings, aiming to help family adults build the skills needed to support their children’s learning and offering opportunities for adults and children to learn new skills together. 560 adults engaged in 2010/11

4. Support the development of employability skills, through training, work placements, volunteering and enterprise

There are two main target groups for this activity; those still in education and those of working age who are not in employment.

For those not in employment, the skills partnership will work closely with providers of the Work Programme and JobCentre Plus, to ensure that support is maximised locally. This could include through Get Britain Working measures, including supporting the further development of work clubs and enterprise clubs, and the take up of the New Enterprise Allowance. Externally funded (European Social Fund) schemes focusing on pre-enterprise, volunteering and work limiting illness, will continue to be utilised.

For those still in education, the skills partnership will work with the 14-19 Strategy Group to encourage schools to continue with work experience, support linkages between schools and businesses and incorporate enterprise education into the curriculum.

Through the provision of labour market intelligence, the skills partnership will encourage schools to support those skills necessary for employment or self employment, including basic employability skills such as communication and team work. The

Youth Contract will provide a platform for developing work experience and skills development and will allow Central Bedfordshire to build on the successful experience gained through the Future Jobs Fund.



Next Steps and Outcomes

The Central Bedfordshire All Age Skills Strategy has been produced by Central Bedfordshire Council on behalf of all skills partners in the area. Looking to the future, the Council does not seek to lead the partnership but commits to working with partners to take forward the critical next steps.

The Council will seek to encourage local employers and providers to step forward to lead the dialogue that will establish new ways of working to deliver the priorities set out in this strategy. The consultation and recent conversations suggest that this approach by the Council to bring employers and providers closer is welcomed by skills partners and business representatives. Offers to lead, contribute and to build on existing local good practice and emerging models are being received.

Key next steps are:

- Convert the expressions of interest to be involved or lead the skills partnership into agreed roles and actions
- Innovate and establish new effective ways of working between local employers and local education and training providers
- Increase skills dialogue between employers and providers focussed on better outcomes that meet our local employment needs
- Maximise availability of local intelligence to inform career choices and pathways
- Greater promotion to employers and individuals of the value of investing in skills
- Maximise impact of public and private sector investment in skills delivery and infrastructure

By 2016 we aim to see:

- More employers engaged in shaping local skills provision
- Local employers and providers working better together to maximise the impact of skills investments
- Increased number of employers having access to appropriately skilled people to drive productivity, competitiveness and innovation
- Increased cross border collaboration on common sector and workforce development issues
- Increased awareness amongst employers and individuals on the value of investing in skills
- Improved local labour market to inform career choices and easy to use referral routes to access help and advice as and when needed
- Reduced unemployment rate for 16-18yr olds which remains below the national average

Monitoring Progress

It will be important to quantify the impact that the Strategy, the integrated approach and its accompanying actions are having on skills and the local economy. The skills partnership will develop an evaluation framework to really understand the outcomes from the strategy and how interventions are delivering change or not. The following indicators will be monitored annually.

Outcome	Current Position	Source
Reduced level of reported business skills gaps and shortages	24% of businesses reported skills gaps 23% of businesses reported skills shortages	2011 Central Bedfordshire Business Survey
To maintain the employment rate of Central Bedfordshire, so that it is at least 5% higher than the national average	Central Bedfordshire Employment rate – 76.2%. England average 70.3%	ONS Annual Population Survey, June 2011
To be in the top 25% nationally of key stage 4 results for the measure 5 x A* - C outcomes including English and Maths at GCSE.	Currently in top 50% with 59.4% of pupils achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and Maths.	Department for Education, 2011
Increase in % of working age people with level 2, 3, 4 qualifications	73% of working age population qualified to level 2 or above 55.3% to level 3 or above 33.9% to level 4 or above	ONS Annual Population Survey January-December 2010

Supporting basket of measures may include:

- % of people in the Private Sector who have received job related training
- % of business investing in training
- Satisfaction rates with skills provision by business
- Unemployment rate of 16-24 year olds
- Number of people in apprenticeships
- 16-18 year olds participation rates in education, employment and training

Overall performance against the above will be published as part of the annual review of the Local Economic Assessment (LEA), in regular online bulletins and via the Children's Trust Board. The annual review of the LEA will also provide an opportunity to assess the impact of the strategy on particular demographic groups, through the disaggregation of some of the higher level outcomes.

Partners

Thank you to all those individuals and businesses who took part in the focus groups and interviews and those who responded to the consultation on the draft strategy. Thanks also to the following partners who have been involved in shaping the strategy:

Aldwyck Housing	EMB Ltd	Partnership Community Forum
Archimedes Consulting	Eureka Schools	Positive Experience Training
Aspley Guise Lower School	EVO Ltd	Positive Parenting Network
Barnfield College	Evolve Your Future	Relate
Bedford College	Exemplas	Ridgemoor Training
Bedford Estates	Federation of Small Businesses-Luton and South Beds Branch	Seetec
Bedfordshire and Luton Chamber of Commerce	4YP UK	Skills Funding Agency
Bedfordshire Association of Town and Parish Councils	14-19 Strategy Group	SMART Employment Solutions
Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity	Groundwork Luton & Bedfordshire	SMART Learning
BedSeN	Health Improvement Delivery Partnership	TACCERT
BPHA	JHP Training	TCHC
Business in the Community	Job Centre Plus	The Learning Partnership
Business Learning	Kennedy Scott	The Prince's Trust
Children's Centres Network	KWS Educational Services	University of Bedfordshire
Central Bedfordshire College	MAPS	Upper School Heads Group
CFBT Education Trust	Mymar Training Ltd	Voluntary and Community Action South Bedfordshire
Consign	National Apprenticeship Service	Wenta
Cranfield University	NHS Bedfordshire	XERS
Develop EBP	North Hertfordshire College	Youth Parliament
EEDA	NVQ Academy	Zenos

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