



# Blackburn with Darwen Employment and Skills Strategy

2017 - 2040

## Introduction

Blackburn with Darwen's Employment and Skills Strategy aims to get more local people into work by delivering a skills system that meets the needs of both employers and residents of the borough.

Why is it needed? We have too few people of working age in work – one of the lowest rates in the region. A significant number of employers raise skills, or the lack of, as a recruitment issue. They report concern about the impact this has on their continued productivity and growth of their business. This can be related to workforce development needs or an inability to recruit new talent, particularly from the local area.

In addition to this, skills are not just important for regional, national and global competitiveness; they have the potential to transform life chances and to drive social mobility.

We need to ensure that Blackburn with Darwen's education system has the infrastructure and framework in place to capitalise on what the Government sees as the skill needs for the future as set out in the Industrial Strategy White Paper published in November 2017. The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP) already has a Skills and Employment Strategic Framework and will be producing its own 'Industrial Strategy' in response to the White Paper. The Borough needs to be well placed to shape and influence this to ensure it reflects the needs of Blackburn with Darwen.

There are lots of organisations and sectors across the borough and wider Lancashire area who wish to address skills issues and improve outcomes. There is already good practice and collaboration in place and a range of initiatives that engage both employers and skill providers. However, if we are to really improve the skills system for Blackburn with Darwen, we need to work together to a shared vision with joined up delivery.

This Strategy responds to three questions – where are we now? Where do we want to be? How are we going to get there?

We all need to play a role and take responsibility for actions if we are to build and sustain a skilled and motivated workforce. The new Blackburn with Darwen Employment and Skills Board will provide a forum for co-operation and collaboration across the employment and skills sector to deliver the six objectives set out in this Strategy.



Harry Catherall  
Chair of Employment and Skills Board and  
Chief Executive of Blackburn with Darwen  
Council



Ian Brown  
Vice-Chair of Employment and Skills Board and  
Chair of Hive

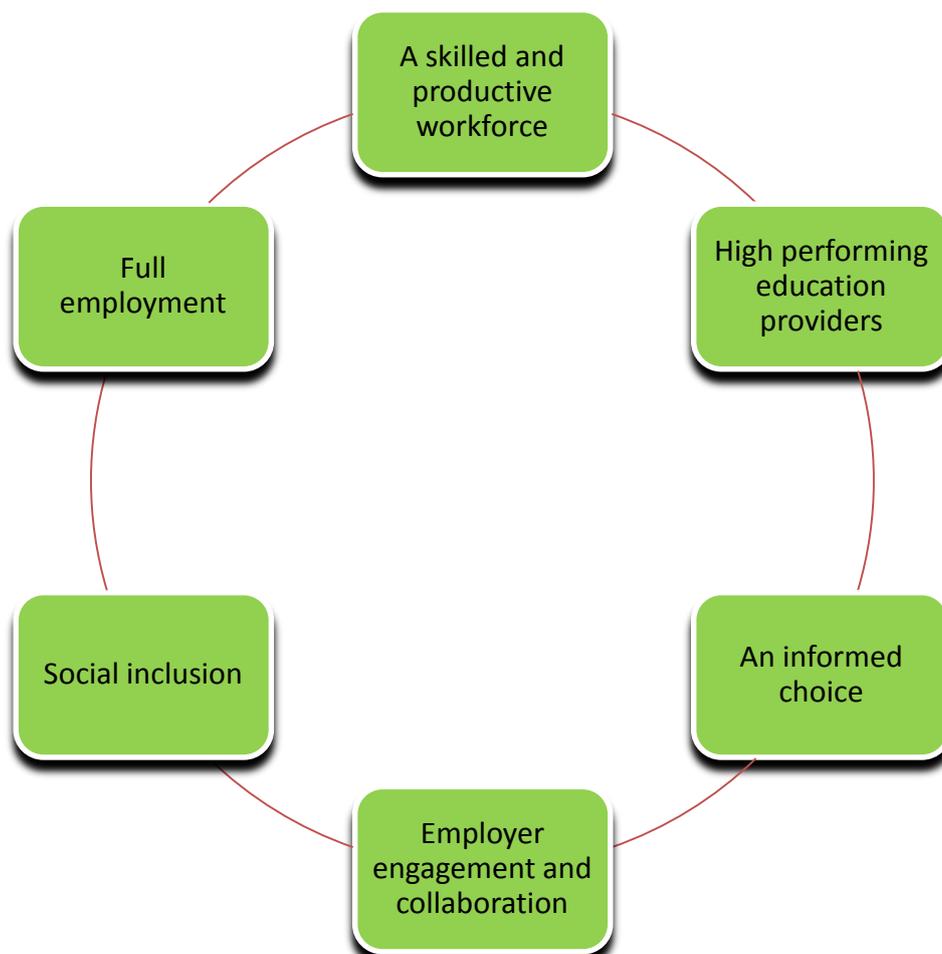
## Vision

By 2040 Blackburn with Darwen will have full employment and a skills system that works for everybody. More local people will be in work than ever before, employers will have a skilled, motivated and productive workforce; the working age population will have access to higher level jobs both within and outside the Borough; Further and Higher Education institutes will be providing fit for purpose courses and learning opportunities; and children and young people will be learning and developing within a strong education system that is building aspirations and positive behaviours to prepare them for work and adulthood.

The unique potential we have in our people, place and products will have been both recognised and utilised and used as a catalyst in regeneration and innovation.

## Strategic objectives

The vision will be achieved by delivering six policy objectives which have been developed and agreed by partners, aligning with national policy and the LEP Skills and Employment Strategic Framework. These objectives will be delivered collaboratively across the skills system, public, private and voluntary sector through and an action plan developed by the Blackburn with Darwen Employment and Skills Board.



## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Understanding the current position is crucial in developing a meaningful strategy and action plan. Data is refreshed regularly and can outline a position at a given point in time and provide trends. This section has been developed using available data as at October 2017 from three detailed Council reports – Focus on: skills and qualifications; economic inactivity and worklessness; employment and jobs<sup>1</sup>. These reports will be refreshed regularly. A short summary is set out below.

### **Existing plans and strategies to build on**

To set the vision and action plan, we need to understand the current position of the employment and skills offer in Blackburn with Darwen, our role within Pennine Lancashire, Lancashire and the wider North West.

There are several plans and strategies in place or in development at Pennine and Lancashire level which the Council and partners can shape and influence to the greatest benefit for Blackburn with Darwen. We can use these as a baseline to build on, taking the best of each and replicating to fit our own requirements.

These include the LEP's Skills and Employment Framework 2016 - 2021<sup>2</sup>. The priorities for which cover four themes (appended) – future workforce; skilled and productive workforce; inclusive workforce; an informed approach. The LEP Skills and Employment Board are currently undertaking a refresh of the evidence base which will feed into the LEP Strategic Economic Plan.

The Pennine Lancashire Growth and Prosperity Plan 2016-2032 outlines ambitions to accelerate growth and close the productivity gap. One of its four strategic objectives is 'Education, Skills and Workforce Participation' to improve education attainment from early years to higher education and remove barriers to participation.<sup>3</sup>

Within the Borough we also have the 'Plan for Prosperity' 2014-2020 which includes improving the employment prospects of residents and ensure that business skills needs are met, as a priority.<sup>4</sup>

### **Employment and jobs**

There are an estimated 64,500 employee jobs in Blackburn with Darwen and as the largest urban area in Pennine Lancashire, the borough provides around 30% employment and represents 10.4% of employment in the whole of Lancashire, although a third of the Borough's jobs are part-time, a greater rate than is found nationally. Employment rates are below regional and national levels and stand at the lowest of the 14 districts in Lancashire. Unemployment figures have fallen by 1.9% between December 2014 and December 2016 (8.2% down to 6.3%).

The health sector provides almost a quarter of jobs in the borough, with manufacturing, education and retail in total providing well over half the total jobs market. In terms of occupational groups over the last 10 years there has been a decreasing trend of 'professional occupations' and an increase in 'administrative and secretarial' roles. The occupational group of 'managers, directors and senior officials' shows a marginal increase over the same

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/Pages/Detailed-facts-and-figures.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.lancashirelep.co.uk/lep-priorities/skills-employment/skills-and-employment-strategic-framework-2016-2021.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/Lists/DownloadableDocuments/PL-Investment-Plan.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/Pages/Local-strategic-partnership.aspx>

period. These figures can be used to estimate the proportion of 'degree level' jobs since both 'professional' and 'managerial' groups are the two main occupational groups that generally require a degree. In addition, from the period April 2016 to March 2017 there were around 14,500 residents employed in these two occupation classification, compared to 18,400 people working in these jobs within the borough. This could suggest that employees are commuting into the borough to work in these roles.

The census 2011 provides the latest figures on travel to work areas. Based on this data Blackburn with Darwen has a net inflow of just over 4000 employees. 24,000 commute into the borough to work and 19,800 commute out. 67.2% of employed residents in Blackburn with Darwen live and work in the borough, the largest proportion of all the local authorities that make up the Pennine Lancashire area. Of those who commute out of the borough, the largest flows are to Hyndburn, Preston and Ribble Valley and Bolton. Of those who commute in, the largest in-flows are from Hyndburn, Ribble Valley, Burnley and Bolton.

The Pennine Lancashire Growth and Prosperity Plan sets out plans to accelerate economic growth and housing development which will deliver 28,000 new homes and 14,000 jobs with economic growth particularly focussed along the M65 corridor which will include infrastructure investment.

In addition the Lancashire LEPs Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) in 2014<sup>5</sup> set out ambitions to create 50,000 new jobs, 40,000 new homes and generate an additional £3m GVA by 2025. The SEP is currently being refreshed to reflect the £1bn investment secured through various initiatives such as Growth Deal and transport funding.

There is no clear trend on apprenticeships in the borough with variations over recent years, however the number of apprenticeship starts across the North West and England has shown a marked decrease. The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy should bring an increase in apprenticeship starts.

### **Skills and qualifications**

The level of higher qualifications that working age residents hold in Blackburn with Darwen is below regional and national averages, however there has been a gradual increase in recent years.

There is excellent private nursery provision and nursery schools in place in Blackburn with Darwen. Due to the levels of deprivation and high numbers of English as Another Language (EAL) pupils, many children enter the education system below national norms at Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1 (KS). EYFS measures remain in the bottom 10 Local Authorities nationally – 7% behind in speaking and 5% in communication/literacy which is indicative of the population profile. A great deal of support has gone into this crucial phase of learning and many pupils are making excellent progress and “catch up” later in primary phase. In September 2017 Blackburn with Darwen secured almost £200,000 over two years which will be put into improving English outcomes from EYFS to KS3.

Overall Blackburn with Darwen performs above the national average on the new Progress 8 measure of attainment at Key Stage 4, although there are significant differences between progress in the borough's schools.

Figures for schools in the borough have tended to track below the regional trend however figures for the last two years have shown an upward trajectory and provisional figures for 2015/16 are now above regional and total state funded sector averages. 89% of all students in secondary schools attend schools deemed good or better by OFSTED.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.lancashirelep.co.uk/media/8856/LEP-strategic-economic-plan.pdf>

A level results for colleges in the borough (AAB or better) have tended to be below regional and state sector averages, with results for 2015/16 showing a reversal in the upwards trend that had been evident since 2013/14. Only 5.1% of those studying in the borough achieved AAB or higher in at least 2 facilitating subjects<sup>6</sup>. This is significantly lower than the England average for all schools/colleges (17%) and England state funded institutions (13.9%).

Whilst some establishments perform above average on vocational qualification results, overall the results are just below the England average. Alongside this completion of study is also below England average.

There has been a marked improvement in participation figures in the last 12 months. The NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and 'Not Known' combined figure sits 0.3% below the national average (5.7% compared to 6.0%, May 2017) and participation 0.7% above the national average (92.5% compared to 91.8%).

The proportion of working-age residents (16 to 64) in the borough qualified to level 4 or above has seen a gradual increase in recent years, currently standing at 28.0% (21.9% in 2011). This gradual increase mirrors the regional trend although the borough figure remains below the regional level.

In 2013/14, of the 435 graduates who were in work six months after graduation, 165 were working in Blackburn with Darwen. Among this group, a quarter (24.4%) were 'loyals' having both lived and continued to live in the area whilst studying. One in eight (13.4%) were 'returners' having returned to the area to work after moving out of the borough living elsewhere to study. In total, Blackburn with Darwen retained 38% of graduates.

Whilst the proportion of people employed in the borough in higher level positions is on a par with regional figures, the proportion of residents who have employment in higher level occupations is lower than the regional average. This may suggest that people commute into the borough for higher level roles or that once in these roles, residents move out of the borough to live.

### **Economic inactivity and unemployment**

Blackburn with Darwen has the highest level of economic inactivity of all the local authorities in the Lancashire LEP area, 30.6% of people aged 16 to 64; which equates to around 27,900 economically inactive people in this age range. The economic inactivity rate for Blackburn with Darwen has remained at or around this level for at least the last ten years. Females have a greater rate of economic inactivity than males; within the borough 38.5% of females aged 16 to 64 are economically inactive. This is greater than the North West (28.8%) and England (27.1%) figures. 42.6% of those females who are economically inactive attribute this to looking after family/home.

Unlike the North West trends, in the proportion of mixed and workless households, the borough has seen a distinct trend of increasing proportions of mixed households and decreasing proportions of workless households. The proportion of workless households in the borough is on a par with the regional figures. The borough has a higher proportion of mixed households than regionally.

People classified as unemployed are those who are without a job, who were available to start work and were looking for work, or waiting to start a job they had already obtained. At 6.0% the unemployment rate in the borough is above regional (5.1%) and national (4.8%) levels.

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<sup>6</sup> Facilitating A levels are ones that are commonly needed for entry to leading universities. They are: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Maths, Geography, History, English Literature and Classical or Modern Foreign Language

Overall, 2,640 people age 16 and over are claiming unemployment benefits JSA or Universal Credit, equating to 2.9% of the population aged 16 to 64. The rate for the borough is just above the North West (2.5%) and England (1.9%) averages.

As at February 2017 there were 8,570 people claiming Employment and Support Allowance in the borough. 20.4% were in the work related activity group, and 62.9% in the support group, where the claimant is not expected to find work. The two main conditions that claimants eligible for ESA are recorded as having, forming two thirds of claimants, are for 'mental and behavioral disorders' (4,530, 52.9%) and 'diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue' (1,180, 13.8%).

# WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

## Vision

By 2040 Blackburn with Darwen will have full employment and a skills system that works for everybody. More local people will be in work than ever before, employers will have a skilled, motivated and productive workforce; the working age population will have access to higher level jobs both within and outside the Borough; Further and Higher Education institutes will be providing fit for purpose courses and learning opportunities; and children and young people will be learning and developing within a strong education system that is building aspirations and positive behaviours to prepare them for work and adulthood.

The unique potential we have in our people, place and products will have been both recognised and utilised and used as a catalyst in regeneration and innovation. Lancashire has real opportunities, the LEP is forecasting 50,000 new jobs, 40,000 new homes and an additional £3m GVA by 2025.

In Blackburn with Darwen we need to be ambitious about the future of our employment and skills system. We cannot change things overnight but we can find solutions, put action plans in place and monitor performance so that by 2040, those children who are born today will have accessed the best possible skills system throughout their early years and young adult life.

The six policy areas to achieve this are set out below. They cannot be developed in isolation. To have a skilled and productive workforce we need high performing education providers who work with businesses and employers so that learners can make an informed choice about their employment opportunities, which will be open to all residents who are able to work so that Blackburn with Darwen can achieve full employment.

1	2	3	4	5	6
A skilled and productive workforce	High performing education providers	An informed choice	Employer engagement and collaboration	Social inclusion	Full Employment

### 1. A skilled and productive workforce

Employers need a skilled and productive workforce to sustain their organisation or for growth in the private sector. Appropriate skills levels, positive behaviour and good health are all key components of a strong workforce. To ensure employers in the borough have access to a skilled and productive workforce we need a co-ordinated approach across the public and private sector. We need collaboration and joined up activity between schools, businesses, health care, training providers, voluntary sector, families, and residents to match workers with jobs.

#### What does this mean?

- Active collaboration between organisations and the workforce
- Every pupil will have access to an innovative and engaging making and designing curriculum by 2040
- There will be less people without qualifications

- Effective use of the Apprenticeship Levy to support employee training and upskilling
- Employers will undertake workforce/succession planning
- Employees and learners will participate in and have access to health and wellbeing support
- Employees and learners will have positive behaviours such as good communication, responsible, team working, time-keeping, organisation

## 2. High performing education providers

We want all education providers in the Borough to be OFSTED rated as good or outstanding. 89% of all students in the Borough in maintained secondary education attend schools deemed by OFSTED as good or better. We want the existing School Improvement Groups to continue to support each other and provide peer to peer challenge with strong and accountable governing bodies who can access to support and relevant training. We want education providers to be at the heart of families and communities building aspirations for pupils and families and supporting better attitudes to learning and acceptable behaviour.

What does this mean?

- All education establishment will be OFSTED rated as good or outstanding
- All secondary schools will be above average on Progress 8 and Attainment 8 measures
- All education establishments will have strong and accountable Governing Bodies
- All FE providers will be above average on progress measures
- All schools will work positively with children and families to build aspirations and encourage learning

## 3. An informed choice

There are calls for Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) to become mandatory within education establishments and accessible to all residents. Residents should have easy access to high quality and impartial CEIAG to ensure that both young people and adults know and understand the range of employment, education and training opportunities in Blackburn with Darwen and can make informed choices. We want a coordinated approach based on local labour market information and future skills requirements.

What does this mean?

- All secondary schools and FE/HE institutions will provide impartial CEIAG where appropriate
- Digital access to CEIAG through Skype, online blogs, case studies etc.
- We will maintain a strong skills and employment evidence base across partners and share information
- Families will engage in CEIAG to support young people in making an informed choice about their future
- Employers will engage in CEIAG to highlight future opportunities
- Annual careers fair for young people to meet with employers

## 4. Employer engagement and collaboration

Education and skills provision should meet the needs and requirements of local employers and private sector growth aspirations. To do this, we need employers from both the public and private sector to engage with education and skills providers and identify what the technical and skills gaps are and what the future requirements will be. Employers will recognise the value of workforce development and investing in the skills development of all employees, regardless of level. We need employers to be at the heart of the skills and work

system so that skill development is demand-led.

What does this mean?

- Employers will help to shape and influence learning to assess succession planning and close sector skills gaps
- Employers will work with the CEIAG to outline pathways into work and future workforce demands
- Publically funded provision will better meet the requirements of employers
- Employers will invest in employee training and development
- We will connect FE/HE institutions with employers to retain higher skilled workers and graduates in the Borough and seek to provide summer internships to attract future graduates
- Business Leaders will engage with education providers and clearly outline their sector skill and technical expertise requirements
- Hive and other private sector bodies will proactively engage with schools
- Employers will engage with DWP as part of their recruitment process
- Employers and schools will encourage the take-up of work placements

## 5. Social inclusion

The Borough has long-standing social challenges which negatively impact on the ability of employers to recruit locally. The cycle of benefit dependency and dis-engagement in employment needs to be broken and we need to work with specific groups such as those with long periods outside the labour market or those with a special educational need and/or disability, or those who don't have access to the resources or family support they need. We will actively encourage re-entry into learning or employment for those residents who are currently outside of the work and skills system including those from BAME and disability groups.

What does this mean?

- All age groups will be able to access support to re-engage with the labour market
- All age groups will be able to access enterprise and self-employment support
- Pathways into employment, training, volunteering schemes will be clearly signposted and promoted
- Employers will be diverse and inclusive in their recruitment practices to promote social justice
- Digital learning will be promoted and encouraged
- Accessible examination centres
- Intensive support for troubled families
- Access to paid work for those with a special educational need and/or disability

## 6. Full employment

There is no universally agreed definition for 'Full Employment' and clearly it isn't feasible to get everybody of working age into a job or studying due to several factors including those who are of working age but are looking after family/home or are retired. However, we can ensure that the number of job vacancies equals the number of people actively seeking work, unemployment figures are significantly below the national average and that those who are experiencing long-term or temporary sickness are supported back into the job market.

What does this mean?

- Creating more jobs and self-employment
- Targeted employment programmes

- Meaningful employment, less reliance on benefits
- Healthcare and employers collaborating
- Increased number of apprenticeships including higher level and degrees
- Promoting volunteering opportunities as an entry into employment
- Encouraging employers to allow flexible working practices

## HOW DO WE GET THERE?

We must not work in silos. There are already several partnerships in place and programmes under development. These must be embedded, providing the strong foundations on which to keep building to achieve the vision of having full employment and a skills system that works for everybody in the Borough by 2040.

### **Employment and Skills Board**

The Blackburn with Darwen Employment and Skills Board will have responsibility for taking this Strategy forward by developing a clear and prioritised action plan for delivery which will be reviewed and refreshed annually. The Board will need the support of partner organisations and work collaboratively to develop this action plan and co-ordinate activity. An honest and open approach is needed sharing information, best practice, experience but also providing opportunity to challenge existing arrangements and test new opportunities. Membership is drawn from across the public, private and voluntary sector.

### **Blackburn and Darwen Hive**

The Hive Business Leaders Network is a powerful network which brings together the knowledge, networks, passion and determination of businesses, organisations and individuals to help develop and promote Blackburn and Darwen, challenge perceptions and raise the profile of the area. Hive are represented on the Employment and Skills Board and will help to shape and influence the education and skills system in the Borough. The Hive Steering Group will play a critical role in improving joint working between employers and schools, colleges, universities and other training providers to better meet the needs of residents and employers and seek ways in which education and business collaboration can add value. Hive are committed to supporting young citizens by providing learning, experience and careers guidance.

The Hive Business School facilitates this collaboration by bringing businesses into schools for mentoring, advice, career information, helping with interview practice and becoming school Governors. Funded by the LEP and the Careers and Enterprise Company, the Business School has already established partnerships in all maintained secondary schools.

### **Strategic Alliance**

In June 2017 a new strategic alliance was agreed between Lancaster University, Blackburn College and Blackburn with Darwen Council which will see the university's research, expertise, facilities and networks applied to improve local employment and skills needs. The initial work plan includes a wide range of projects with improving skills, attainment and routes into quality jobs being a high priority. Building on this, Blackburn with Darwen is on the Leading Places programme, directed and funded by HEFCE and the Local Government Association. This is an innovation leadership development programme for collaborative responses to place-based challenges. Whilst this is health based the outcomes are to achieve a future generation fit for life, learning and employment with reduced illness and improved wellbeing, clearly leading to a more productive workforce.

### **Lancashire LEP**

The Council is a Board Director with the Lancashire LEP. The LEP is a creative collaboration of Leaders from business, universities and local councils who direct economic growth and drive job creation. One of 38 LEPs across the Country it has been successful, with the support of the shadow Lancashire Combined Authority in attracting significant Growth Deal funding from the Government. This includes capital investment in the colleges and universities within Lancashire providing Lancashire learners with access to high quality and cutting edge

technology and facilities for learning. The LEPs' Skills and Employment Board is refreshing its evidence base to inform the Strategic Economic Plan and have commissioned research to develop a clear vision for a high performing technical education system in Lancashire. The Blackburn with Darwen Employment and Skills Board will inform this research and work with the LEP to ensure skills and employability remain a key priority.

### **Third Sector**

The Borough has a very strong third sector presence who provide employability programmes and training, mental health and well-being support, over-50s work support, family support and volunteering pathways into work. The third sector is committed to working in a co-ordinated way and targeting solutions based on residents and employers' different needs.

### **National Policy Drivers**

The Government's Industrial Strategy provides a long-term policy framework against which major public and private sector investment decisions can be made. With Five Foundations of Productivity, Four Grand Challenges and a number of Sector Deals the Government's vision is to be the world's most innovative economy with good jobs and greater earning potential; a major upgrade to the UK's infrastructure; be the best place to start and grow a businesses; create prosperous communities across the UK.

Within a skills context the Government plan to establish a technical education system that rivals the best in the world with substantial investment in maths and computer science teaching and a new National Retraining Scheme that will support people to re-skill. The Government sees artificial intelligence, clean growth, autonomous vehicles and digital innovation as the key development in technology that are set to transform industries and societies around the world and intends to invest in these areas. We need to ensure that Blackburn with Darwen's education system has the infrastructure and framework in place to capitalise on what the Government sees as the skill needs for the future.

To underpin the Industrial Strategy areas will be expected to develop their own 'Local Industrial Strategy'. Through its Board Director position with the LEP and its prominent role in Lancashire governance, the Council will help to shape the Lancashire Local Industrial Strategy.

Looking further ahead there is concern that Britain's exit from the EU will impact on funding for employability programmes which currently rely on EU funding. The Borough must be in a strong position to clearly articulate the impact if these programmes are unable to continue and propose solutions, including potential devolution, which can attract Government investment.

## Lancashire Skills and Employment Framework – Overview

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>FUTURE WORKFORCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspire young people in schools and post-16 learning through engagement with business and the 'world of work'.</li> <li>• Enhance employability and enterprising skills, attitudes and behaviours throughout the education journey.</li> <li>• Improve routes from classroom based provision and apprenticeships to higher level professional &amp; technical education.</li> <li>• Ensure that our post-16 learning infrastructure is fit-for-purpose, and aligned to our economic priorities and labour market demands.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SKILLED AND PRODUCTIVE WORKFORCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of apprenticeships (including higher level and degree) across our priority sectors.</li> <li>• Increase retention of graduates through engagement with business during and after studies.</li> <li>• Increase the number of employers undertaking workforce / succession planning and engaging with skills provision.</li> <li>• Increase leadership and management capacity in small to medium sized enterprises.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>INCLUSIVE WORKFORCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the employability and skills of unemployed adults and NEET young people and progression towards learning and work.</li> <li>• Facilitate routes into employment through sector specific initiatives targeted at areas with labour market demand and/or to support inward investment opportunities.</li> <li>• Raise digital skills to improve social mobility and engagement with public services, and to increase employability.</li> <li>• Incorporate social value into LEP-driven capital programmes to gain added value for Lancashire.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AN INFORMED APPROACH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with employers, providers and partners through 'Sector Skills Development Partnerships' to oversee, facilitate and deliver sector skills actions plan in priority sectors.</li> <li>• Maintain the skills and employment evidence base and continue to develop the framework.</li> <li>• Use the framework and allied intelligence to influence, prioritise and direct the use of mainstream and discretionary funding.</li> <li>• Connect with other LEP areas to influence, collaborate and share good practice.</li> </ul>

