

THE CALDERDALE POST-16 LEARNING, EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS STRATEGY

Inclusion Ambition Collaboration

June 2025

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Inclusion Ambition Collaboration

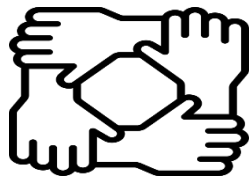


The Calderdale Post-16 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy (2025 – 2027 Refresh)

Introduction

Calderdale Council and its partners have the highest ambitions for children and young people. Through this refresh of the Post-16 Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy, the partners set out the priorities and actions required to ensure all young people are on a clear pathway to fulfil their potential. The refreshed strategy will help ensure that young people can continue to access the necessary opportunities and support to secure a strong foundation in the Calderdale economy.

The Strategy is based around 3 underpinning themes:



Inclusion – All young people in Calderdale will be able to access post-16 opportunities that meet their capabilities and aspirations. Young people will influence the provision and support available to them and will

always be treated with kindness and respect.



Ambition – Young people in Calderdale will be encouraged and supported to be ambitious, unique, to pursue their dreams and to solve problems. Partners will focus provision on what young people “can do” with the result that young people are happy and ready to succeed.



Collaboration – Partners in Calderdale will collaborate so that young people get the very best that is available. Innovative programmes, effective employer engagement, family and wellbeing support and outstanding practice will ensure that young people have the skills and resilience to be successful for life.

... and 5 Cross-Cutting Priorities

Education Inclusion – including actions to address: post-16 drop-out; young people whose progression is at risk as a result of exclusion, elective home

education, disrupted education and other risk of NEET indicators; and improving employment outcomes for young people with SEND or SEN Support.

Sufficient Provision – including actions to: increase below level 2 provision and re-engagement activity for NEETS; improve and extend work experience programmes in key stage 4 and 5; and to develop more supported internship and employment programmes for young people with additional needs.

Talent Development – including actions to boost: progression into higher level apprenticeships at 18; employer sponsored Higher Education routes; programmes to encourage young people to stay in Calderdale; structured work experience and enrichment, and targeted place-based activity.

Improving Outcomes – including programmes that: intervene earlier to improve post-16 progression and outcomes; encourage collaboration across pre- and post-16 institutions; support alternative provision and targeted work experience; and increase the employment rate for young people who have had an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Labour Market Priorities – including: supporting key sector-based programmes; promoting widespread labour market understanding; driving apprenticeship and enterprise growth; and improving the quality and quantity of employer engagement overall.

Post-16 Learning, Employment and Skills, 2025–2027 Update

Post-16 learning, employment and skills performance in Calderdale has many strengths and lots of opportunities exist to develop and improve. However, there are also some systemic weaknesses and threats from external forces that need to be addressed. This strategy builds upon the original 2022–2025 version and recognises the uniqueness of the district and all the geographic, demographic and historical factors that make it such a compelling place for people to live, work and play. The strategy supports the ambition for Calderdale to be at the forefront of sustainable economic development, to be innovative and collaborative, and to ensure that all people are included and treated with kindness and respect. The strategy encourages young people to be unique and to relish all the opportunities that arise from its diverse economy, its

beautiful places, and its strong learning, employment and skills infrastructure.

The strategy is required in order that partners in Calderdale can plan effectively to meet new and emerging challenges and opportunities in the borough. In general, young people who reside in Calderdale can access a wide range of good quality post-16 learning, skills and employment provision and programmes. Post-16 progression and attainment are broadly positive and above regional and national averages on most key indicators. However, this is not consistent across all outcomes and for all groups of young people. Youth unemployment and inactivity is stubbornly high and on a negative, upwards trajectory. Likewise, more young people face exclusion and disrupted education particularly in key stage 4 which in turn leads to poor progression post-16, and the likelihood of poor outcomes as these young people reach adulthood.

Locally, the strategy complements and will support priorities in the existing Inclusive Economy Strategy, Employment and Skills Framework, Local Skills Improvement Plan, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and in the work of

the Education Inclusion Strategic Partnership Group. Nationally, the new Government recognises poor physical and mental health, exclusion and poor attendance, lack of qualifications and regional inequalities as key drivers of rising numbers of young people (16-24) in the Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) category. A series of interventions are planned to reduce/prevent NEET and achieve the 80% employment rate ambition. These interventions have been prescribed in the White Paper ‘Get Britain Working’ which contains details of employment reforms, the next stage of Devolution, the establishment of Skills England and funding announcements in the Autumn Budget.

A key policy proposed by the new government, a “Youth Guarantee” will drive much of what Skills England does in the 16-24 age range. The Youth Guarantee proposes that every young person will have a firm offer of employment, further learning or an apprenticeship. Nationally, apprenticeship participation especially amongst young people and in areas facing the greatest level of deprivation – has reduced dramatically (Youth Futures Foundation Report). The “Youth

Guarantee” is expected to include an Apprenticeship Guarantee for Young People with at least 50% of funds (raised through the new levy) going towards apprenticeships, primarily for young people, and the remainder towards other forms of accredited training.

Following the White Paper, the Government have announced the relaxation of the requirement for young adults (19+) to have GCSE English and Maths (at level 4 and above) before starting an apprenticeship. This has been a substantial barrier to progression for many young people and should enable more young people in the 18-24 category to access opportunities for paid work.

The Government have also announced three significant funding programmes which will address the link between health limiting conditions and being out of work. These will support young people in Calderdale and are summarised below:

1. **Connect to Work** – a three-year funding programme which will specifically target all age groups whose labour market status is currently categorised as “inactive” and whose health is a limiting factor in them finding and retaining

employment. Connect to Work is designed to bring greater cooperation between health and employment support providers and will utilise the Supported Employment Quality Framework and the Individual Placement and Support models to help people access and maintain work. The West Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority are the lead accountable body for this programme with elements of the funding and commissioning devolved to Local Authorities.

2. **Health and Growth Accelerator** – will enable the Health and Care sector to boost people’s health and trial innovative services that enable health and employment services to work together to support the journey into employment, or for people to remain in employment and manage their conditions effectively, thus reducing the risk of them losing their employed status. The Health and Growth Accelerator is being managed by the West Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) with devolved programming to local ICB’s for financial year 2025/26.

3. **Economic Inactivity Trailblazer** – The Lead Accountable Body for this programme is The West Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority with elements of the funding and commissioning devolved to Local Authorities. The programme aims to support people who are “inactive” (i.e. out of work and not mandated to find work through the benefits system) into employment.

A new national jobs and careers service is proposed (bringing together Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service) and will be focused on getting people into work and helping them get on at work. The service will be responsive to local employers, inclusive for all users, and work in partnership with other local services.

Preventing NEET/Early Intervention and Support

The new government is proposing a guarantee of 2 weeks’ worth of work experience for every young person at secondary school – building relationships with schools/colleges and local employers to equip young people with work ready skills. The indications to date

are that this work experience will be spread over the 11-18 life cycle and will move away from the traditional model of a block of work experience and towards a series of encounters and experiences with employers which may include some element of block work experience. The Careers Enterprise Company are trialling what this model may look like in the future and are funding a series of pilot programmes in each region.

The new government has also committed to improve careers advice in schools and colleges by recruiting over 1000 new careers advisers and by revising the statutory guidance on careers education to strengthen the commitment to work experience and the use of the Gatsby benchmarks to drive a comprehensive careers education programme in all secondary settings. In addition, access to specialist mental health professionals will be available in every school, so all young people have access to early support to address problems before they escalate. This complements the proposals for Young Futures Hubs – open access youth hubs in every community, identifying those most at risk of exploitation, crime, anti-social behaviour and supported by youth workers, mental health practitioners and careers advisers.



These Young Futures Hubs should be linked to the existing DWP supported Youth Hubs which have sought to reduce the numbers of young people (16-24) claiming benefits and which continue to be funded locally.

The Government have also announced a review of the national curriculum and assessment being led By Prof. Becky Francis. The review will be wide ranging

in scope and will be focussed on introducing measures to reduce educational inequalities.

Regionally, the West Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (WYMCA) is in the process of finalising and agreeing its Local Growth Plan aligned to the West Yorkshire Plan 2024. The Local Growth Plan sets out the priorities and actions WYCA will support for people,

businesses and communities and it establishes the basis for the discussions with government about funding and policy flexibilities to be devolved to the Mayoral Combined Authority.

The overarching aspiration in West Yorkshire is to create a region of learning. Core components of that aspiration relevant to the Calderdale Post-16 Strategy are: the development of an all-age careers service; a reformed and locally led employment support system; and the development of an educational enrichment programme. Recent work undertaken by WYCA with partners supports these priorities. A blueprint for an all-age careers service has been developed with input from local and national partners. A review of the Employment and Skills System – in partnership with Local Authorities has concluded and will improve the delivery of programmes and cement the role of Local Authorities as convenors of local partnerships, and determiners of priorities and programmes of delivery.

The Mayoral Combined Authority alongside the Chambers of Commerce are leading the second iteration of the Local Skills Improvement Plan. The Plan will update the sectoral priorities for West

Yorkshire and the specific skills and recruitment challenges facing employers in the region. The Post-16 Strategy will respond to the priorities identified by targeting Labour Market priorities upon actions relevant to the Skills Improvement Plan and collaborating across the Learning, Employment and Skills system to attract funding and develop programmes to address these priorities.

In summary, the emerging policy frameworks at the national and regional level are positive and seek to address many of the concerns raised by the Calderdale Inclusive Economy Boards and the Calderdale Employment and Skills Partnership. The priorities and actions outlined in the refreshed Inclusive Economy Strategy and the newly developed Calderdale Employment and Skills Framework are clearly aligned to the direction from national and regional developments and should provide the optimism and practical support for Calderdale to make good progress on its labour market priorities. This refreshed Post-16 Learning, Employment and Skills strategy will ensure alignment with the new national and regional policy framework and also take account of changing circumstances and priorities

locally which have emerged during its lifecycle to date. The refreshed strategy will support efforts to garner commitment to and support for the priorities and actions set out especially with regional and national stakeholders. Its articulation of the needs and priorities of Calderdale will form the basis for conversations with the Mayoral Combined Authority, Department for Work and Pensions and Department for Education about how to address the opportunities and challenges in the borough.

The strategy, its themes, priorities and actions will be overseen by the Employment and Skills Partnership and The Inclusive Economy Board.

STRATEGY SUMMARY

Post-16 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy 2025-2027

Calderdale Council and its partners have the highest ambitions for Children and Young People. Through this Post-16 Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy, the partners set out the 3 themes, 6 priorities and 24 actions required to ensure all young people are on a clear pathway to fulfil their potential by the time they reach the age of 25. The strategy will help young people access the opportunities and support to achieve their aspirations for the future and have the opportunities to build a successful career in a strong, local economy. It is a strategy based upon the uniqueness of the district and the strength of its people, heritage and institutions.

Our vision

By 2027 Calderdale will have an ambitious, inclusive and collaborative approach to post-16 learning, employment and skills where young people fulfil their potential and progress into rewarding careers.

Collaboration



Partners in Calderdale will collaborate so that young people get the very best that is available. Innovative programmes, effective employer engagement, evidence-based research and outstanding practice will ensure that young people have the skills to be successful for life.

Inclusion



All young people in Calderdale will be able to access post-16 opportunities that meet their capabilities and aspirations. Young people will shape the provision and support available to them and will always be treated with kindness and respect.

Ambition



Young people in Calderdale will be encouraged and supported to be ambitious, unique, to pursue their dreams and to solve problems. Partners will base their provision on what young people “can do” with the result that young people are happy and ready to succeed.

Cross-cutting priorities



**Improving
outcomes**



**Sufficient
provision**



**Education
inclusion**



**Labour Market
Priorities**



**Talent
Development**

The Calderdale Context

District Information – 2025 Update

Post-16 learning, employment and skills activity in Calderdale is delivered by a range of statutory and non-statutory bodies operating in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The majority are local to Calderdale; however, some regional and national organisations are instrumental in the funding, commissioning and delivery of relevant services and programmes.

Calderdale has 5 mainstream schools with sixth form provision. It has a sixth form college, a specialist sixth form provision for students with Education Health and Care Plans, and a general further college. There are approximately 4700 young people in years 12 and 13 in Calderdale. Over 30% of these are educated outside of the district with significant numbers attending post-16 settings in Huddersfield, Rochdale, Burnley, Leeds and Bradford. This migration is more reflective of the porous borders and ease of access/transport routes than any issue with the quality and range of provision available in Calderdale

itself. Indeed, the provision within and outside Calderdale, experienced by most young people, is of a very high quality and the outcomes for young people generally reflect this.

Young people aged 16-18 who reside in Calderdale generally achieve better post-16 outcomes than their peers in the rest of West Yorkshire, the wider region and in England as a whole. The table on page 11 demonstrates that across a wide range of indicators – the district performs well. The data provided has been drawn from the Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT) produced by the Department for Education (DfE) or directly from the National Client Caseload Information System (NCCIS) – the statutory return provided by all Local Authorities to the DfE and detailing the activity of young people in years 12 and 13.

The original 2022-25 strategy included 24 actions across 6 priorities. 11 of the actions were satisfactorily progressed and were deemed to be green on a red, amber, green rating scale. A further 11 actions were amber with some progress being made. Only 2 were deemed to be red with very little progress being made. All the original 24 actions will continue to be progressed through this updated

strategy albeit some have been amalgamated/amended to reflect the changing landscape, prioritisation and funding/policy environment.

There have been notable achievements through the original strategy. These are listed below:

- significant resources and programmes have been attracted to support the climate change agenda, highlighting and developing green skills through employer talks, careers resources and delivery programmes. Notable achievements include: WYMCA funded Green Skills Projects in Brighouse and Calder Valley High Schools; Green Careers programmes offered to Primary Schools; and Green Jobs Careers Resources developed through Calderdale Employment Hub.
- the establishment of significant digital and creative industries level 3 provision at Dean Clough following capital investment via the Local Skills Improvement Funds supporting higher level skills acquisition and talent retention.
- The development of the Piece Hall Academy providing real work

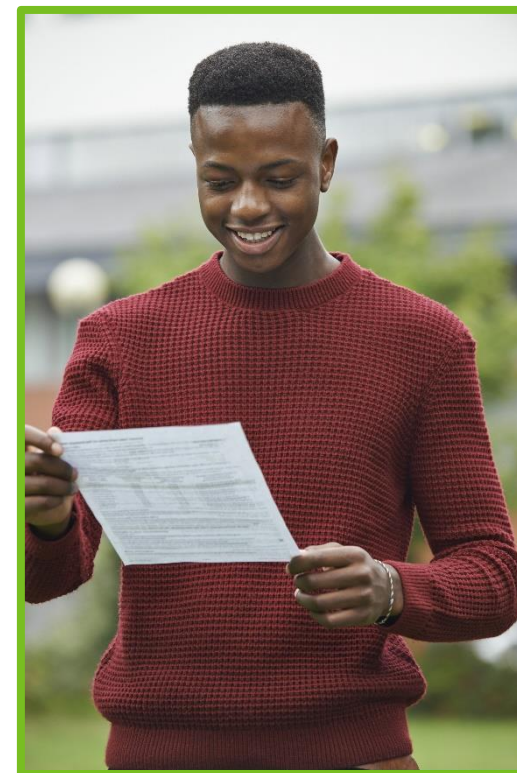
- experience on live music events for young people.
- the establishment of the Nexus in Schools Alternative Provision providing extended work experience and reduced core curriculum provision for young people in key stage 4 at risk of exclusion and / or poor progression.
- establishment of a Summer Internship Programme providing inspirational content for young people about to enter Year 11 and at risk of failing to achieve their potential GCSE grades and make good progress into post-16.
- the creation and extension of the Calderdale Employment Hub and excellent contractual compliance and outcomes associated.
- the development of the DWP funded Calderdale Youth Hub and extension of this into Phase 2.
- the continued development of Calderdale Adult Learning Family Learning, skills bootcamp provision and the hugely successful programmes supporting young adults with numeracy (multiply) and SEND.
- establishment of the Strategic Inclusion Partnership Board to address and reduce high levels of exclusions.

- development of Supported Internships in ISCAL and proposal to double the number of Supported Internships in Calderdale via the creation of a Calderdale SEND Employment Forum.
- being selected to pilot the Government's new commitment to 50 hours of work experience in KS4/5 via the Careers and Enterprise Company funded EQUALEX programme.
- having a strong and ongoing Youth Voice input into the implementation of the strategy, in particular from young people with Education, Health and Care Plans.

The following improving indicators are also indicative of system wide improvements:

- improved A level results at the higher end of the academic ability range
- consistently high numbers of young people who progress onto apprenticeships
- increases in the numbers of young people accessing Higher Education.
- The low numbers of young people whose participation is "unknown"
- Increases in the number of young people reporting that they felt

- "happy" with future prospects (65% in 2023 compared to 60% in 2021)
- a positive decrease in the numbers of young people with low life satisfaction (23% in 2023 down from 28% in 2021)
- in the relatively low numbers of vulnerable young people who are NEET.



There is a need to improve performance in:

impacts upon resilience, behaviour, drop-out rates and attainment.

- the levels of youth unemployment which are higher than regional and national averages and growing faster.
- the numbers of young people who are excluded from or not on a school roll and particularly those who are in Key Stage 4.
- the numbers of young people who have a disrupted education and poor attendance (below 70%) particularly in key stage 4 and 5.
- the employment of young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan or with additional support needs/undiagnosed unmet needs.
- the educational outcomes of young people in key stage 5 who are impacted by poverty and deprivation.
- the outcomes overall for young people living in the most deprived wards of the borough.
- the high numbers of young people required to undertake resit exams in English and Maths in key stage 5 as a result of not achieving level 4 and above in key stage 4.
- the levels of emotional and social maturity in key stage 5 which

Key performance indicators	Leeds	Bradford	Wakefield	Calderdale	Kirklees	Leeds	Bradford	Wakefield	Calderdale	Kirklees	Y&H Average	England Average
HE progression	4	3	5	1	2	42.60%	44.60%	38.30%	50.40%	45.80%	42.90%	46.90%
HE progression – FSM	4	1	5	2	3	24.40%	33%	20.80%	29.80%	26.50%	25.20%	29%
NEET / Not Known	5	3	4	2	1	8.30%	4.40%	4.50%	4.30%	3.30%	5.80%	5.40%
SEND NEET – Not Known	5	2	3	1	4	13%	8.30%	9.10%	7.30%	11%	10.40%	10.20%
Level 2 at age 19	4	5	3	1	2	80%	75.74%	80.39%	83.01%	81.83%	80.64%	84.26%
Level 3 at age 19	3	5	4	2	1	52.48%	46.85%	49.41%	55.14%	56.93%	52.51%	58.78%
Apprenticeship progression	4	5	3	1	2	3.40%	2.80%	3.80%	4.70%	4.30%	4.30%	3.20%
Level 2 at 19 – FSM	5	4	3	1	2	78.04%	72.63%	78.29%	81.19%	79.02%	77.96%	79.83%
Level 3 at 19 – FSM	4	3	5	2	1	31.34%	31.91%	28.28%	34.17%	38.23%	31.83%	37.56%
APS – Tech Level	4	5	2	3	1	26.91	26.14	28.47	28.11	29.37	28.16	28.11
APS – Applied General	5	3	2	1	4	30.10	30.47	30.87	31.49	30.26	30.61	29.09
A Level APS	4	5	2	3	1	33.45	33.26	34.98	33.52	35.57	34.03	34.38

Much of the data relating to young people being NEET or Not Known remains volatile as the implications of the pandemic and subsequent recovery/recession and cost of living crisis continue to impact upon young people and the nature of provision in Calderdale.

However, what is noticeable, as the young people affected by Covid/cost of living move into the labour market – is that youth unemployment has risen significantly in Calderdale. Whilst learning

and skills outcomes remain broadly positive, a growing number of young people with multiple barriers to progression are struggling to attain a firm foothold in the labour market by the age of 25.

This significant shift in the outcomes for this group of young people represents the emphasis given within this strategy to this matter. Local partners have determined this to be the most pressing priority within the strategy and one that requires specific interventions designed to meet

local circumstances. This is reflected in the updated action plan.

Calderdale has the highest percentage of 18–24-year-olds claiming unemployment benefits against West Yorkshire, Regional and Great Britain averages, with the gap wider against all comparators at January 2025 than at October 2022. As of April 2025, 8.7% (1,240) of 18–24-year-olds are claiming unemployment benefits. This is an increase from 7.3% in July 2024 (1,045 individuals) and the figure has remained

consistently higher since November 2024. Calderdale remains higher than regional and national comparators (6.5% and 5.6% respectively).

Calderdale's performance on the percentage of level 2 and 3 qualifications attainment by the age of 19 is above regional neighbours, in-line with statistical neighbours, but below national average on both measures. For the academic year 2022/23, 83% of 19-year-olds had a level 2 qualification with 55% having a level 3 qualification. The inequality gap in Level 2 attainment at 19 improved in 2022/23 (academic year) from 24.1 to 21.4 percentage points after a deterioration the previous year, which comparators did not experience. At level 3, although Calderdale's gap is in line with national and regional averages and better than statistical neighbours, the inequality gap has widened in 2022/23 from 22.4 to 25.1.

Themes and Priorities - 2025-2027 Update

Inclusion

The key post-16 institutions and stakeholders along with wider partners in Calderdale want to address the challenges arising from a significant and growing cohort of young people whose progression and future employment prospects are impacted because of having a disrupted education. Disrupted education is identified as a significant cause of educational under-attainment at key stage 4. It is a key indicator in the risk of young people having pro-longed periods of being NEET/Not Known aged 16-18 and unemployed from the age of 18-24. Whilst being a significant, limiting factor in the thwarted progress and achievements of young people, disrupted education is the result of wider, adverse experiences impacting upon the lives of young people, namely:

- discrimination on multiple grounds
- poor mental and physical health and undiagnosed/unmet support needs
- being a care provider for dependent adults/siblings
- living with domestic abuse

- being a child looked after by a local authority and having experienced multiple school and residential moves
- poverty/housing insecurity
- school exclusion
- involvement in the youth criminal justice system.

Ethnicity and the presence of certain cultural traditions can also contribute to educational disruption as can those young people who are electively home educated. Whilst such disruption may not be accompanied by the associated adverse experience/trauma, the experience still results in challenges to employment and training progression and under-attainment in key stage 4 and 5 outcomes. Partners have defined “disrupted education” as being consistent attendance in key stage 4 and key stage 5 of below 70%.

We know that young people in Calderdale who have experienced a disrupted education, have been excluded or electively home educated, are disproportionately represented in NEET and Not Known figures aged 16-18. They are more likely to drop out of post-16 provision and are less likely to adapt to post-16 learning environments and

expectations. In addition to the disadvantage presented by the underlying causes of their reduced attendance – the educational deficit means many lack the prior knowledge and study skills which are prerequisites for successful progression. The disconnect between educational experience and actual age means that access to an appropriate curriculum alongside peers is limited. The lack of formal attendance in pre-16 settings can often mean that learning and behaviour needs have not been identified, assessed and supported with the resulting impact on motivation, self-worth, confidence and mental health. Partners in Calderdale are concerned about the ability to meet the diverse needs of this group in a post-16 and youth unemployment context. These concerns extend beyond the ability to engage young people in a recognised study programme, apprenticeship or re-engagement provision or to secure suitable employment with or without training. It also includes providing consistent, joined up and timely support to address the underlying personal, social, health, emotional circumstances and matters relating to housing, criminal justice etc. More importantly, the voice of these young people is often missing from the efforts of agencies to provide support.

Beyond, the statutory offers of agencies and the limited resources and devolved flexibility to bespoke provision – young people currently have little influence over what support they receive and little chance to specify what they would like and need. In part, this is a result of a lack of system flexibility, years of funding reductions to statutory children's/youth services and the associated demise of multi-agency collaboration and accountability. Whilst arrangements for youth voice and co-production are very strong in Calderdale, the hopes and aspirations of the most marginalised young people need to be incorporated into local programme responses.

This strategy and the aligned work in the Developing Well Board, Education Inclusion Strategic Partnership and wider Employment and Skills framework is crucial in addressing these systemic challenges and in unlocking the potential for local, tailored and effective solutions. It is clear that data around education inclusion needs to be better developed in order to drive improvements in the system, and that this data needs to be aligned to and illuminative of the experiences and aspirations of young people. The organisations in Calderdale commissioning or delivering services for

young people possess a serious intent and growing ability to engage with young people. The voice of young people within this strategy bears testimony to this. The challenge, more often, lies in the ability to influence nationally determined programmes which determine most of the post-16 learning, employment and skills provision available to young people. Understanding the needs and wants of young people and the gap in provision is vital if the funding and programmes which can be shaped to local need are to be used to best effect.

Young people in Calderdale have experienced a disproportionate impact in terms of NEET/Not Known and youth unemployment with the most disadvantaged young people experiencing this impact more than others. Young people aged 16-25 have borne the brunt of job losses between April 2020 and April 2025. We know that long-term youth unemployment (18-24) has increased nationally during the pandemic and that Yorkshire and the Humber is the only region to experience an increase in unemployment rates for all young people 16-24. Calderdale had the highest proportionate increase in the number of young people unemployed between March 2020 and March 2025

(16-24) of all the West Yorkshire Local Authorities. At the same time, the number of young people experiencing poverty (as defined by receipt of Free School Meals) and achieving level 2 and 3 qualifications by 19, is declining.

Partners in Calderdale recognise that there is a growing and potentially intractable issue facing young people whose progression into adulthood and gaining a firm foothold in the labour market is not as linear as most of their peer's experience. Whilst there has always been a small group of young people who have experienced disadvantage, discrimination and personal barriers – this group is growing and some of the solutions and choices previously available have disappeared. Additionally, the challenges facing young people, post-pandemic and cost of living crisis are compounded and more complex. Whilst partners believe there are opportunities in the future to work with young people to commission appropriate education, employment and skills pathways – we need local, regional and national partners to collaborate to be able to scale what is currently working and to commission provision and support for the gaps that exist.



The range of vocational options outside of recognised study programmes is limited and employment support services are struggling to support young people who need to explore a range of options to find the one that suits. Bespoke pathways, personalised support and joined up working exist but not at the scale and level needed now and in the future. There is a window of opportunity to address this, utilising opportunities

arising from: the adoption of the Calderdale SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy; new investments in alternative provision places in pre-16 settings, the devolved single settlement for West Yorkshire through the Mayoral Combined Authority; the Get Britain Working measures and funds; and the Calderdale Youth Hub.

Ambition

Calderdale has historically maintained low levels of NEET and Not Known young people. Performance has outstripped regional and national averages and has typically seen the district placed in the top 35% of Local Authority areas. Crucially, Calderdale has maintained very low numbers of young people whose post-16 activity is “not known”. This means that whilst the young person is not currently engaged in employment, education and training (EET) they are known to local agencies and there is support in place for them to re-engage in positive EET activity.

As the table on page 11 demonstrates, Calderdale also historically outperforms other areas across a range of post-16 indicators and suggests that settings are performing well, and employers, in particular, are supporting the drive to recruit young people into apprenticeships. Information about apprenticeship opportunities is systematically communicated to young people, and employers in the district enthusiastically develop apprenticeship opportunities to train and retain future talent.

This demonstrable strength around employer engagement and investment in young people is an area where partners can capitalise and extend efforts. Discussions with employer bodies and post-16 providers suggests that growth in higher level apprenticeships is focussed upon digital pathways and routes into software development. The manufacturing, engineering, green economy and healthcare sectors are also areas that offer opportunities for highly paid, rewarding careers in local and global companies who play a prominent role in the Calderdale and local economy. The strategy and action plan proposes several priority labour market areas where this employer engagement and curriculum development can further develop a pipeline of talent and enrich the educational experience of young people. In particular, the universal careers provision and infrastructure offers the opportunity to bring greater engagement between businesses, schools and colleges to drive curriculum development and to inspire young people to train for and enter the careers of the future linked to the priorities in the Calderdale labour market and its place in the heart of the economy of the north.

Curriculum diversification and enrichment remains a priority particularly for young people who lack the parental networks and social/financial backing to access significant and impactful out of school provision. Matters to be prioritised include; work experience, leadership development, financial literacy, public speaking, outdoors education, environmental and climate change initiatives, community youth offer and opportunities in creative and cultural pursuits. Proposals emerging from Prof. Becky Francis's national curriculum review will be important in this regard.

Similarly, Calderdale has some of the highest rates of self-employment in the UK and a history of enterprise, business start-up and highly skilled and networked freelance workers. It is entirely likely that most young people in 2025 will be self-employed or have their own business at some point in their career. This likelihood needs to be reflected in the careers education, information, advice and guidance available to young people, and be embedded in the wider lifelong employment and skills framework for the district.

Collaboration

Much has been achieved through the original iteration of this strategy to boost collaboration and to improve the local partnership for learning, employment and skills matters.

This has been achieved through the work of the Developing Well Board, the Employment and Skills Partnership, the Inclusive Economy Board and the Education Inclusion Strategic Partnership Board. This commitment to collaboration is enshrined in the refreshed Inclusive Economy Strategy, the Employment and Skills Framework and is encapsulated in efforts that local partners have made to work on joint projects, funding bids and to share expertise and capacity.

In line with the significant priority around growing and disproportionate levels of youth unemployment, it is important that partners maintain this collaboration to present a united message on this issue. On behalf of the borough and the young people impacted – partners will need to argue for and secure resources which will enable local programmes to be designed and implemented. Given the scale of the challenge – it is vital that partners make the case for investment that goes above

and beyond existing programme designs and which allow for employers to be incentivised to provide opportunities.

The challenge for the next stage in implementing this refreshed strategy also lies in the ability of partners in the health and skills/employment support sector to achieve the same level of collaboration and partnership working. Much of the Get Britain Working measures rely upon partners in the health and employment support/skills sectors to work together and for local authorities and strategic health boards to develop joint strategies. This work is underway in Calderdale and there are positive signs that the levels of collaboration will be achieved.

However, there are risks in the capacity within the existing health/employment and skills provider to meet need. In order to achieve the outcomes expected in the Connect to Work, Accelerator and Trailblazer programmes and any forerunning programmes – there will be a need to build capacity locally and to collaborate effectively with national providers commissioned to support the capacity requirements. Likewise, the engagement of employers in programme design and implementation is vital. Employers are not currently incentivised

to recruit people of all ages who are not currently active in the labour market. Programmes which secure active employer engagement through wage subsidy or other incentives are required given the nature of the “inactive” cohort and the wider labour market supply and demand balance.

In the pre-16 phase of the strategy, Calderdale benefits from greater coherence because of the willingness to retain a universal “connexions” style careers service. This vehicle for constant dialogue, shared planning and collaboration in terms of delivery is vital to present young people with the best chance of progressing successfully. The revised statutory responsibilities for careers guidance provides the impetus for pre- and post-16 settings to collaborate to ensure that young people have the required exposure to post-16 pathways and options at an early age. The implementation of the new statutory guidance will require significant planning and time to be devoted and the assistance of C+K Careers to facilitate arrangements for young people, school career leaders and teams within colleges and other technical training/apprenticeship providers.

In addition, the development and imminent adoption of the Calderdale SEND and Alternative Provision strategy will enable pre- and post-16 settings to offer provision locally that meets individual needs and works to ensure that all young people can benefit from inclusive education. This strategy, alongside the work of the Education Inclusion Strategic Partnership, the Preparation for Adulthood Steering Group and SEND Employment Forum will progress actions that enable young people and their families/carers to access provision that supports effective post-16 progression and entry into paid employment.

Table of Actions (refreshed 2025-27)

Education Inclusion	Sufficient Provision	Talent Development	Improving Outcomes	Labour Market Priorities
1. Develop high quality data, interventions, provision and leadership that reduces exclusion/off school roll numbers and improves outcomes and post-16 progression for young people at risk of becoming NEET.	5. Ensure that young people with EHCP's and SEN support needs are able to access varied pre and post 16 pathways enabling them to prepare for adulthood and paid employment.	9. Increase the number of young people entering higher level apprenticeships at age 18.	13. Improve the outcomes at age 19 for young people living in poverty.	17. Develop work related learning resources in labour market priority sectors to support the embedding of careers activity in the curriculum and work experience programmes.
2. Develop enrichment and work experience programmes to develop the skills, experiences and confidence to progress into post-16 programmes and achieve improved outcomes.	6. Continue to develop sufficient post-16 below level 2 and re-engagement provision that enables young people to minimise the amount of time they are NEET.	10. Increase the number of Nexus in-School placements – providing alternative pathways for young people at risk of poor post-16 progression.	14. Extend supported internships to more young people with EHCPs/SEN Support Needs and specifically for those with Social, Emotional and Mental Health primary needs.	18. Develop quality Careers Education in the Early Years and Primary phases linked to key sectors/employers in Calderdale.
3. Support young people with disrupted education, poor mental and physical health and other risk of NEET indicators for additional, post-16 transition support.	7. Develop work-based learning provision linked to labour market priorities which provides young people with opportunities to work with employers on real life projects.	11. Develop locality-based support programmes which encourage young people living in the most deprived areas of the borough to reach their full potential.	15. Develop careers and enterprise programmes which support young people to establish their own businesses/become self-employed.	19. Engage, support and incentivise employers through Get Britain Working programmes to increase employment opportunities and to retain/recruit young people from disadvantaged groups and localities.
4. Ensure that young people have the opportunity to shape and influence their post-16 pathways and have the opportunities to live a full life.	8. Develop sustainable programmes for young people who are not working (18-24) and struggling to find work due to poor mental and physical health utilising Get Britain Working funding.	12. Develop talent pipeline programmes in labour market priority areas linked to Health, Creative, Construction, Green, Manufacturing and Digital.	16. Ensure that young people have access to a wide range of out of school activity that supports hope and aspiration and increases life chances.	20. Ensure that employers are able to maximise the return on investment from CSR/ESG programmes arising from investment in Calderdale.

Voice of Young People

Young people have contributed significantly to the development of the strategy, and the key issues they have conveyed are reflected in the actions above and in the narrative in the thematic sections. Discussions have taken place with a wide range of young people reflecting the diversity of the district and ensuring that as many voices have been heard as possible. The involvement of the Youth Council and their ability to engage with a wider network has led to extensive feedback. The intention in involving young people was not to survey via set questions but to allow them to explore the opportunities and challenges in the post-16 context and to identify common experiences, concerns, needs and wants. Inevitably, the lived experience of young people was hugely informative and is of massive value. However, all the young people were able to look outside their experience and identify issues which affect the progress of others both positively and negatively.

Overwhelmingly, young people were very happy with the provision they were in and the experience and support provided by the post-16 setting. In many cases, it had taken some time and changes of mind to



find the “right” provision – but eventually they had done so.

There were frustrations with the ability to navigate through the system and delays therein, however, young people were positive and feedback was good.

The strategy also draws upon the findings of a recent research report led by young people and co-authored by a 19-year-old student. The report: Youth

Employment: An Agenda for Change (Lauren Roberts-Turner and Stephen Carrick-Davies, Face.Work 2022). The report outlines young peoples’ challenges in getting the right experiences, preparation, support and information to secure a sound foundation in the rapidly changing labour market and world of work. Whilst wide ranging in its findings and recommendations – the report rightly focuses upon the impact of a fractured careers education system, the lack of

adequate support for mental health challenges particularly because of Covid 19 and the lack of adequate programmes to address the changes in work, the impact of automation and digitisation, and the realities of entrepreneurship and self-employment.

The Steering Group are hugely grateful to the young people and groups who have readily given their views, and the strategy is more robust and grounded for this. These groups are listed in the Contributors section on page 28.

Several common themes emerged from the discussions. These are summarised in the following pages and followed by a description of where they will be addressed in the actions.

Flexibility and Choice – A set of consistent messages emerged about the ability of young people to experience different options, vocational areas and types of study/employment before deciding which area to pursue. In particular, young people who had left provision/jobs because it didn't suit, felt compelled to make another singular choice without fully understanding what it entailed. Young people also felt that not

sustaining choices led to them being labelled negatively as a failure, a drop-out, and often resulted in a period of inactivity whilst they waited for the beginning of the next academic year. In some instances, young people felt that post-16 choices should be explored in greater detail in KS4 with the opportunity for both extended work experience programmes in different occupational areas alongside more experience days in post-16 settings to look at different study programme options and courses. Many of the young people had changed direction from their original post-16 destination and felt that the post-16 system didn't always facilitate the change effectively. Whilst the young people felt that employer engagement programmes and talks/links with third parties were helpful in helping to shape options – the request here was for specific, experiential programmes that provided insight into study programmes and employment options.

These matters will be taken forward in actions 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8. Ongoing dialogue with young people and enabling them to shape and influence provision will be facilitated by actions 16 and 21.

Enrichment and Careers Support –

Most young people could recall some activities that they undertook in school and having some careers support. Young people felt that they wanted and needed more of this to make a better transition into post-16 learning and skills provision and ultimately employment. Often, young people felt that they were disadvantaged in terms of being able to point to lots of experiences that they could translate into reasons why they should be employed or accepted onto an HE courses or Apprenticeship. There was a sense that the curriculum in pre-16 settings didn't allow for the development of many of the attributes, skills and competencies that would stand them in good stead for the future. A sub-section of this feedback also concerned self-employment and business creation. Young people also wanted to have greater experience of the world of work. This included work experience but also other ways of gaining a better understanding of the workplace. Information about future job roles and in particular "green" jobs were also important. Young people with SEND felt that pathways were often limited and information about alternative routes, options and care arrangements was missing. Young people also felt that those in schools with sixth forms were not

always encouraged to look elsewhere for post-16 options. Young people were also interested in having more “mixed” options in post-16 with vocational work/study programmes available that were not necessarily apprenticeships.

Health and Wellbeing –

Much of the discussion with young people across all ages and abilities reflected the importance of health, well-being and mental health on post-16 progression and attainment. Young people remarked upon the increasing challenges of maintaining good behaviours, lifestyles and attitudes to learning in circumstances that felt volatile and often hostile to them as members of the community. A small number of young people had thrived during the pandemic mainly because the principal causes of their anxiety and poor health had been removed e.g. bullying and/or exam stress. However, the majority had experienced negative impacts either in terms of lost learning, lost jobs, loss of social life and a loss of motivation. Some young people were struggling to recover in the post-pandemic world and felt that they had been setback and were unclear how they would recover. A number had taken significant, life-changing decisions regarding their future and were

experiencing challenges in being able to fulfil these decisions in an environment that seemed very different. That said, most young people felt that they were getting some support whether through informal (family, friends etc) channels or via their schools, colleges, employers and specialist agencies. Overall, young people felt that there were very high expectations upon them between the age of 14-25 surrounding exams, knowing what to do and making choices that feel life defining. Quite often, they felt that they needed more timely support and understanding and the removal of barriers which make changing their minds seem more like failure rather than a positive evaluation and refinement of their aspirations.

Impact Measures

The following indicators will be baselined and monitored to assess whether the strategy is making a difference and to direct resources and actions accordingly.

Further impact measures and a monitoring/intelligence system will be developed as part of the wider Employment and Skills Framework for Calderdale. This framework is being commissioned and will provide the

overarching arrangements for determining impact across all-age employment and skills activity in the borough.

- Outperforming regional and national performance for young people who are Not in Education, Employment and Training
- Matching regional and national performance for 18-24 unemployment
- Outperforming regional and national averages for achievement of level 2 and 3 at age 19
- Increasing the number of young people (18+) from Calderdale who are studying higher level qualifications
- Increasing the numbers of young people taking up Apprenticeships
- Increasing the number of young people with EHCP in Employment
- Increasing the % of Year 10 pupils who feel happy with what might happen to them in the future (65% in July 2023)
- Reducing the % of 15-year-olds with low life satisfaction (23% in 2023).

Contributors

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Representative

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Lorna Aitken
Sammi Lukic-Scott
Amy McGarry

Job Role and Organisation

Acting Principal and Chief Executive – Calderdale College
Service Manager – Education Quality and Strategy, Calderdale Council
Managing Director – Mid Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce
Federation of Small Businesses
Principal – Trinity Sixth Form Academy
Business Manager – Project Challenge
Service Lead – Business and Skills, Calderdale Council
Head of Adult Learning – Calderdale Adult Learning, Calderdale Council
Preparation for Adulthood Coordinator – Calderdale Council
Head of Delivery (Young People) – C&K Careers
Service Manager and Virtual School Head – Calderdale Council
Delivery Manager – Business and Skills, Calderdale Council
Halifax Opportunities Trust
Brighouse High School - Chair of Calderdale Careers Leader Network
Calderdale Cultural Education Partnership
Public Health Calderdale Council

Consultees:

Jane Leech	Calderdale Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Alliance
Calderdale Association of Secondary Heads	
Calderdale Heads of Sixth Form Network	
Calderdale Youth Council	
Calderdale SEND Reference Group	
Scholars Programme Students	Trinity Sixth Form Academy
Students from Calderdale College	
Students from Trinity Academy Halifax	
Students from Project Challenge	
Barnardo's Positive Identities Youth Group	
Barney Mynott	Federation of Small Businesses
Martin Booth	Chair – Calderdale and Kirklees Manufacturing Alliance