

SOUTH YORKSHIRE CHAMBERS

# PEOPLE AND SKILLS MANIFESTO 2022



## OUR VISION

**..is for South Yorkshire to be the place where England's skills system is reshaped to become more agile and meet modern business expectations.**

*"Businesses expect to test the market and make informed choices when they invest. When they use brokers, they expect their information to be real-time and complete. They expect partnership with suppliers in the design of new products and services. They expect them to bring knowledge of the cutting edge but also to respond to the needs of their business. They know that they get out of business relationships what they put in. And they know effective, tech-enabled customer journeys influence spending.*

*"We want our skills system to be like that. Our manifesto sets out how we can do it with the help of government and our regional partners in education and training. We know many features of the modern customer journey are missing from our skills system. Businesses see something that's difficult to navigate. Something that doesn't engage with them to understand their needs or deliver to their convenience. It's 'one-shot' and transactional when their everyday experience is of important business relationships maturing over time. Of course, some businesses do experience good outcomes. We need more of them.*

*"As a business community we must hold up a mirror to ourselves. We are slow to publicise the many great examples of where the system delivers quality. We need to focus more energy on engaging with the skills sector. It's not good enough to say we want to. We have to. It is essential to raise our game as employers and managers.*

*"In South Yorkshire we have widespread skills shortages despite the best intentions of all involved. We must fix this urgently. If we do not, our economy will continue to underperform the UK on most measures of skills attainment, productivity and wages. Businesses know that systemic change makes demands of everyone. It was in this spirit that South Yorkshire Chambers of Commerce led the region's Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) pilot. It brought together businesses, training providers and local government around shared solutions. Our manifesto calls for the delivery of that plan in full, emphasising those elements for which we need local political leadership."*

## WHY NOW?

In the run up to a mayoral election it would be customary for trade bodies to publish a manifesto for the broad range of business policy issues. We chose to focus on workplace skills as the single biggest challenge facing South Yorkshire's economy and residents. Skills drive productivity and ultimately wages. The average output of workers in South Yorkshire is around 20% lower than for the UK – a gap that hasn't narrowed in nearly 20 years. And while the factors behind this are complex, the evidence is that our region underperforms the UK on most indicators of employee skills. In the first quarter of 2022, 93% of South Yorkshire businesses that tried to recruit experienced difficulties – a record high. Professional and managerial roles were the hardest to fill. These are the higher paid jobs that disproportionately impact the performance of businesses. A growing number of the policy levers to effect the changes we want are held by the Mayor. Other changes are in the gift of institutions and businesses based in South Yorkshire. Some are at the national level. But working together, there is an opportunity to come together and in the spirit of partnership seen during the LSIP process.

BARNSELY AND ROTHERHAM CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:



*Andrew Denniff*

**Andrew Denniff**  
Chief Executive



*Joada Allen*

**Joada Allen**  
President

DONCASTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:



*Dan Fell*

**Dan Fell**  
Chief Executive Officer



*Andy Morley*

**Andy Morley**  
President

SHEFFIELD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE:



*Louisa Harrison-Walker*

**Louisa Harrison-Walker**  
Joint Executive Director



*Alexis Krachai*

**Alexis Krachai**  
Joint Executive Director



*Karen Mosley*

**Karen Mosley**  
President

# Together, we can.

With the right policies, resources and political leadership we can achieve:

## Co-creation in the design of policy, skills and training products

**Businesses proactively engaged with local funders and providers.**

Businesses value strong, long-term relationships with their most important suppliers. They know this empowers their partners to anticipate their needs and invest to meet them. Employers want the same level of partnership with South Yorkshire's skills system.

## Higher visibility of growth opportunities through skills

**Effective marketing to business of South Yorkshire's skills provision.**

Businesses know that good marketing underpins the success of any product launch. It raises awareness, communicates benefits, challenges perceptions and stimulates demand. Employers will respond to positive messages, myth-busting and celebrating the successes of the South Yorkshire skills offer.

## A modern customer journey

**A business experience of navigating the skills system that matches the best of other sectors.**

Businesses value well-functioning platforms that mediate between them and suppliers when they need to understand complex markets such as insurance. As with finance, the best brokerage platform for training would be easy to use, up to date and comprehensive.

## Skills delivery at the cutting edge of businesses needs and working practices

**Access to training that responds to the changing needs of employers.**

Changes in knowledge and skills at an industry's frontier may cut across traditional boundaries, professions and develop faster than formal qualifications. Employers want a system that delivers timely skills upgrades that fit their way of working.

## The release of hidden workforce potential in our communities

**Businesses connected to talent in harder-to-reach groups**

Businesses spend a lot of time looking for opportunities that others overlook. Their ability to thrive depends on it. Employers want to work closely with others to open up new employment pathways for those facing barriers to work.

## WHERE WE ARE NOW

### 77%\*

South Yorkshire's output per hour, per filled job as a fraction of the England average

\*In 2019. From ONS Sub-Regional Productivity in the UK (July 2021)

### 40%\*

Share of South Yorkshire businesses who would like to play a greater role in supporting careers provision in schools and colleges

\*South Yorkshire Skills Accelerator Survey, Jan 2022

### 53%\*

Share of South Yorkshire employers who believe their reliance on digital skills will 'significantly increase' over the next 5 years

\*South Yorkshire Skills Accelerator Survey, Jan 2022

### 37% vs 43%\*

South Yorkshire vs England

Share of population with NVQ4+ qualifications (higher-level academic or vocational)

\*Jan 2020-Dec 2020, Annual Population Survey, ONS (Sept 2021)

### 39% vs 34%\*

South Yorkshire vs England

Share of skills-shortage job vacancies that are high-skilled

\*In 2019. Employer Skills Survey (Oct 2020)

## IF WE DELIVER OUR VISION...

- **If the output of South Yorkshire's workers equalled England's average, the region's economy (GVA) would be £7.2bn bigger.\***

\*based on productivity uplift of £13k applied to the total number of employee jobs (2020). Assumes total number of filled jobs unchanged by uplift; England productivity average also unchanged.

- **If the share of South Yorkshire's population with higher-level qualifications matched England's, an extra 49,000 people would be qualified to NVQ level 4 or above in our region.\***

\*based on ONS mid-year population estimates (2020)

- **If 40% of South Yorkshire's businesses converted their willingness to engage into action, 16,000 businesses would play a greater role in supporting careers provision in schools and colleges.\***

\*based on ONS estimate of total number of enterprises (2021)

- **If the share of South Yorkshire firms that believe they lack the required advanced digital skills were to address this, 13,000 businesses would be upgraded with the latest know-how.\***

\*based on 31% who 'strongly disagree' or 'tend to disagree' they have the advanced digital skills their business needs (from South Yorkshire Skills Accelerator Survey, Jan 2022), and ONS estimate of total number of enterprises (2021)

## ...BUT WE WILL NEED TO FIX

- **A customer journey for skills fragmented by government funding requirements with too many providers working at cross-purposes**
- **The deficit between employer enthusiasm to engage and their actual involvement in developing curriculums, programmes and qualifications**
- **The perception, and sometimes the reality, that skills provision isn't at the cutting edge of content or delivery, with few of the 'bite-sized' or 'light-touch' options employers like**
- **The absence of a quality learning culture in too many workplaces**
- **Resource gaps and structural barriers to skilled employment for our harder-to-reach communities**

## We will judge our political leaders by...

**1. Their ability to secure and commit funding, where it is needed, to deliver South Yorkshire's LSIP and our Manifesto**

**2. Their success in convening South Yorkshire's businesses, skills and education establishments to deliver on the shared responsibilities set out in the LSIP and Manifesto**

**3. Their success in achieving the national-level commitments and changes needed to deliver our LSIP and Manifesto**

## Implementing the Local Skills Improvement Plan

This manifesto follows from the submission to government in April 2022 of South Yorkshire's Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

The development of this plan was led by Chambers of Commerce between October 2021 and March 2022. Its development engaged hundreds of employers through workshops and surveys. It drew on the insights of trade unions, other business networks and anchor institutions across the region.

## HOW WE'LL GET THERE WE ARE CALLING FOR...

### 1. A modern customer journey

South Yorkshire must invest in a new, improved system for connecting employers and residents to training opportunities. This would include a 'big bang'-style overhaul of brokerage with providers more directly involved in funding a shared platform. A new Apprenticeship Hub service would link people and businesses to apprenticeship opportunities, share best practice and publicise successes. Businesses will offer their time and expertise in developing these solutions. But we need training providers and our regional partners in skills, education and government to fund and deliver them.

### 2. Co-creation in the design of policy, skills and training products

Government should pilot in South Yorkshire a new cash grant award scheme to incentivise employer engagement on skills with schools, colleges and universities. The region must put the business-facing engagement of skills and trade bodies piloted in the LSIP onto a permanent footing with an ongoing, funded programme of activity. Unspent Apprenticeship Levy funds would be channelled back into the priorities identified with employers and their representatives. Businesses will work with partners to design effective incentives. But we need government to show more willingness to reform the levy and localise control of unspent funds than it has in the past.

### 3. Skills delivery at the cutting edge of businesses needs and working practices

Government should commission national statisticians to collect and publish regular, in-year data on employer skills needs, putting this on an equal footing with economic statistics like inflation. The region should pilot a new system of 'micro-badging' and 'credentialing' for bite-sized learning and workplace training. And South Yorkshire's digital and EdTech sectors should be funded to work with employers and skills providers to identify digital skills needs and modes of delivery. Businesses will recognise quality-mark schemes for high-quality bite-sized learning. But we need government to lead on reforming official data and fund our proposed initiatives on digital skills.

### 4. Higher visibility of growth opportunities through skills

South Yorkshire should introduce a new and nationally significant 'Festival of Learning' to showcase opportunities for continuous learning, community programmes and parental engagement. And the region should launch a new and high-profile 'Investors In Young People' standard for business excellence in developing those at the start of their careers and for upskilling or re-skilling staff. With the financial support of partners, business can organise high-impact showcase events on behalf of the region and support the development of new standards in career development.

### 5. The release of hidden workforce potential in our communities

South Yorkshire should launch a linked series of campaigns to improve employer engagement with harder-to-reach groups. The region should fund 'last-mile bootcamps' to improve the work-readiness and commercial skills of those about to join the workforce. And we must expand careers activity to include showcasing roles to primary-age learners. Business stands ready to further promote the adoption of the Armed Forces Covenant and similar pledges. But we need our partners to help build connected skills programmes to realise their full potential, building on the success of initiatives like Tech for Troops.

## ! JOIN OUR CAMPAIGN

South Yorkshire Chambers of Commerce will publish their full manifesto and detailed recommendations in May 2022

For more information visit:

[www.brchamber.co.uk](http://www.brchamber.co.uk)

[www.doncaster-chamber.co.uk](http://www.doncaster-chamber.co.uk)

[www.scci.org.uk](http://www.scci.org.uk)

Access our Local Skills Improvement Plan, the research and data that underpin it online: [sy-skillsaccelerator.co.uk/resources](http://sy-skillsaccelerator.co.uk/resources)

### SOUTH YORKSHIRE CHAMBERS IN NUMBERS 2021/22

- **13,019** BUSINESSES SUPPORTED EACH YEAR
- **2,707** MEMBERS
- **383,368** STAFF EMPLOYED BY MEMBERS
- **671** EVENTS AND BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES DELIVERED
- COMMUNICATION REACH OF **69,742**
- **57** CHAMBER WORKFORCE
- **£203,973,041** VALUE OF EXPORTS FACILITATED BY CHAMBERS
- **21,413** YOUNG PEOPLE SUPPORTED