MINUTES

Preparation for Working Life WG

Wednesday 23rd September 2026, 10.00am – 11.00am
Via Teams

PRESENT

Rod Chambers	Hull & East Yorkshire LSIP
Hannah Crookes	Hull & East Yorkshire LSIP
Ailey McLaughlin	Active Humber
Andy Goudie	Hull College
Annie Francis	Re-Dec
Attiya Kausar	Skills For Care
Ben Fletcher	Humber Learning Consortium
Bethany Simmonds	Skills For Care
David Redden	NCFE
Debbie Foster	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Ellie Walkington	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Erika Spight	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
George Zeuner	Humber and North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board
Holly Parkinson	Learning Skills Partnership
Ian Thompson	MBI Yorkshire Ltd
Joanne Craven	DWP
Joanne Tejo	East Riding College
Lisa Jones-Hill	Bishop Burton College & Riseholme College
Mark Boothby	Sewell Group
Mark Burley	Hull Citywide Developer Partnership / Keepmoat
Sam Hind	Humber Construction Training Group
Sharon Coutts	Happy Futures Support Specialists
Sharon O'Brien	Happy Futures Support Specialists
Simon Marshall	Daifuku Airport Technologies
Steve Tomlinson	Hull City Council
Sue Balthazar	PROBE Hull Ltd
Susannah Trotter	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Wendy Dodson	Skills Network
Wendy Macadam	Wilberforce Sixth Form College

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Rod Chambers welcomed attendees to the first Preparation for Working Life Working Group meeting under HEY LSIP 2.0. It was explained that the thematic approach had been developed in response to feedback from employers, previous working groups and the HEY LSIP Board, with Preparation for Working Life sitting alongside Technical Skills, Educational Workforce and Knowledge Point.

It was noted that this theme builds upon the Employability Skills work undertaken through HEY LSIP 1.0, including the development of an employability skills passport/framework. Organisations were currently able to continue with their own employability passport approaches while the position regarding the wider framework was considered further.

Rod Chambers highlighted the importance of the Working Group bringing together different perspectives from employers, education providers, local authorities, community organisations and other partners to identify the challenges associated with preparing people for employment and opportunities for collaborative action.

2. HEY LSIP 2.0 ROADMAP OVERVIEW

Hannah Crookes provided an overview of the HEY LSIP 2.0 Roadmap and explained that it was a live document, which could evolve in response to employer, provider and public-sector stakeholder feedback.

The key objectives within the Preparation for Working Life theme were outlined as:

- Employability and careers pathways – embedding employability skills and better aligning careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) with labour market intelligence and growth opportunities.
- Work experience and employer engagement – increasing employer-led learning through placements, employer projects and wider engagement to improve workplace exposure and job readiness.
- Progression and inclusion – including activity to support those who are NEET and strengthening links with the proposed NEET Task Forces to be established by both Hull City Council and East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

The intended outcomes included improved employability skills, clearer career pathways, greater workplace exposure and improved job readiness.

It was reinforced that delivery of the LSIP was intended to be collaborative, with different organisations leading or contributing to individual roadmap actions. The roadmap provided sufficient flexibility to respond to new initiatives or adapt approaches where existing activity does not achieve the intended outcome.

A point was raised regarding the importance of establishing meaningful KPIs and measures to demonstrate impact, including measures relating to pre-employment activity and progression into employment rather than simply volumes of skills provision. It was agreed that measurable outcomes would be important both for local monitoring and reporting to Skills England.

3. ROADMAP DELIVERY – DISCUSSION

a) Challenges

A wide-ranging discussion identified a number of recurring challenges around preparation for working life.

- *Employability skills and workplace readiness:* Members reinforced feedback already received from employers that technical skills are often not the principal barrier to recruitment. Employers continue to identify gaps in areas such as communication, resilience, initiative, confidence, timekeeping and general workplace behaviours. There was discussion around the need for individuals to understand what employability skills are, recognise where they are already developing them and be able to demonstrate them to employers.

- *Employer perceptions and expectations:* Skills for Care highlighted challenges within adult social care, where relatively few younger people enter the sector. This can reflect perceptions of the sector, employer concerns around younger workers and in some cases the views of people receiving care. The importance of empathy, initiative, resilience and other interpersonal skills was particularly emphasised.

- *Work experience and employer engagement:* Work experience was recognised as highly valuable in developing employability skills, but access remained inconsistent. Education providers reported strong relationships with some employers and sectors but continuing difficulties securing sufficient opportunities across the full range of career interests. Greater flexibility may be required, particularly for individuals who are not immediately ready for a traditional placement.

  It was suggested that the current system appeared fragmented to employers, with schools, colleges, training providers, DWP and other organisations seeking employer engagement separately. Greater clarity and coordination of the employer offer could help address this.

- *Supporting individuals with additional barriers:* Members discussed the importance of recognising that some learners require a more gradual introduction to the workplace. Shorter placements, small-group activity, employer engagement within education settings and other flexible approaches could provide stepping stones towards fuller work experience. Employers also required support to understand the needs of individual learners and how they can provide appropriate opportunities.

- *Confidence, resilience and mental health:* Local authority and community-sector representatives highlighted confidence, anxiety, mental health, resilience and individuals' sense of their own value as significant barriers. It was suggested that intervention and exposure to the world of work may need to begin much earlier, helping to build aspiration and confidence before individuals reach the point of transition into employment.

- *Decline in informal early work experience:* The group discussed the role traditionally played by Saturday jobs and other part-time employment in developing workplace skills. These opportunities appeared less consistently available than previously and varied significantly according to geography. Members noted that regulation, health and safety requirements and changes in the labour market may all contribute to this.

- *SME capacity:* The ability of SMEs and microbusinesses to provide work experience, apprenticeships and other opportunities was identified as a particular challenge. Smaller employers can face practical barriers including time, supervision capacity, administration and the immediate commercial pressures of running their businesses. The group recognised that employer engagement therefore needed to demonstrate a clear benefit to the employer rather than simply making additional demands upon them.

b) Opportunities

Members identified several opportunities which could be explored further through the Working Group.

There was support for developing a clearer and more consistent understanding of employability skills, including helping learners recognise where those skills were developed through education, work experience, volunteering, community activity and other settings. This could build upon the employability framework work already undertaken through HEY LSIP.

The group discussed the need to consider different models of work experience rather than relying solely on traditional one or two-week placements. Opportunities could include shorter or staged experiences, employer projects, internships, workplace visits, employer-led activity within education settings and other forms of meaningful exposure to the workplace. It was emphasised that activity needed to be meaningful both for the learner and the employer.

More innovative approaches to engagement were also discussed. Examples included education/workplace escape-room activities, gamification and other interactive approaches that could provide a more engaging introduction to careers and workplace behaviours. Members questioned whether traditional careers fairs always provided sufficient engagement and suggested more targeted and interactive approaches may be required.

There was also an opportunity to make greater use of social value and supply chains. Larger employers could potentially encourage their suppliers and contractors to contribute to skills, careers and employment outcomes, particularly where these expectations were clearly incorporated into procurement and social-value commitments.

The importance of early intervention and aspiration raising was strongly emphasised. Members suggested that careers awareness and exposure to the world of work should begin before the traditional Year 10/11 transition point, particularly for young people who may not have family or community networks that provided access to information about careers and employment.

The group also recognised that Preparation for Working Life must not become solely a young person's agenda. Sector-Based Work Academy Programmes and employer co-designed pre-employment provision were highlighted as examples of successful approaches for adults. It was noted that employability support should consider NEET young people, adults returning to employment and older workers.

c) Key Outputs

The discussion identified a number of areas which could provide the basis for more focused activity through future meetings:

- develop greater consistency around the definition and recognition of employability skills and considering how the existing employability framework work could be taken forward;

- map work experience and employer-engagement activity to understand what is already available, where gaps exist and where employers may be receiving multiple approaches;
- explore alternative and more flexible models of meaningful workplace exposure, particularly for individuals who were not immediately ready for traditional placements;
- consider how careers activity can become more interactive, targeted and better aligned to local labour-market opportunities;
- explore earlier interventions to build aspiration, confidence and awareness of the world of work;
- improve engagement with SMEs and understand what support or incentives would make participation easier and more worthwhile for smaller employers;
- explore how social-value commitments and supply chains could generate additional employment, skills and work-experience opportunities;
- ensure activity addresses the needs of adults as well as young people, including those further from the labour market;
- establish appropriate KPIs and outcome measures to demonstrate whether activity was improving employability, progression and entry into work.

It was recognised that some issues would require a pan-sector approach, while others may need to be considered through a sector-specific lens because the opportunities, barriers and employer requirements can differ considerably between some industries.

d) Next Steps

The HEY LSIP Team agreed to collate the issues, opportunities and recurring themes identified during the discussion and would use these to determine the areas requiring more detailed consideration through future Working Group activity.

Further consideration would be given to how employability skills are defined, recognised and embedded; how work experience and employer engagement could be better coordinated; and how different approaches could be developed for individuals who required additional support or a more gradual introduction to the workplace. The discussion around SMEs would also be taken forward, particularly the need to understand what would encourage smaller employers to participate and how the benefits of engagement could be made clearer.

The group would also consider how employer involvement could be widened beyond those organisations that routinely engaged with skills initiatives, ensuring that employers were meaningfully involved and could see how their feedback had influenced activity. The importance of retaining a focus on adults as well as young people would be reflected in future discussions.

The HEY LSIP Team would consider whether particular issues would benefit from smaller focused discussions, while being mindful of avoiding the creation of unnecessary additional groups. Members were also encouraged to provide any further comments to the HEY LSIP team following the meeting where time had not allowed them to contribute fully.

4. FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

Hannah Crookes would share the meeting invitations for future meetings in due course.

It was noted that future meetings would build upon the themes identified during this initial discussion and provide an opportunity to move from identifying challenges towards developing practical, collaborative responses.