



Doncaster  
Council

# **Education & Skills 2030 Framework Consultation Document | July 2019**

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## Foreword

I was asked to bring an external perspective and strategically review the work across Doncaster with the aim of helping to develop a long-term strategy for learning and skills. I have met many borough and external colleagues including head teachers, governors, Higher Education (HE) and Further Education (FE) leaders, Chief Executive Officers of Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), the regional Schools Commissioner, the Department for Education (DfE), Chamber of Commerce, industry specialists, health and public sector agencies, the Mayor, the Lead Member, and Executive members from her Cabinet, the leads for the voluntary and community sector, adult skills, adult services, and economic growth, Doncaster Children's Trust and most importantly parents and young people, to help shape the initial thinking, and ensure that the developed product has the full buy-in of all key partners from the outset.

To assist in the process, I asked some essential questions:

- What would a successful learning and skills system look like in 2030?
- Where are we now in terms of strengths and areas for development?
- Are we pursuing the right goals to get there?
- Are we working in the right way?

This document outlines the findings of this initial consultation. It considers the current state of the system and begins to articulate what the shared long-term vision and the characteristics of what a successful system would be, with a series of priority theme proposals for consideration in the ongoing development of the collective strategic plan for Doncaster. A summit is planned for the autumn to take forward the statement of intent. In this document, I also propose a number of priority actions for discussion and consideration. If Doncaster is serious about delivering on its high ambitions, it will have to agree on its priorities and how they will be delivered.

I have also considered whether the characteristics of a successful system identified by the *One Doncaster* process (2016) and the revisit (2018) were still relevant. Many of the core characteristics identified are still very relevant and my revisions are informed by many discussions within the borough. Now, they are presented for your consideration.

In summary, there is still so much more to do if Doncaster is to fully realise its ambitions to be a thriving place to live, learn and work, as a place where all young people and adults are engaged in learning and where the education and training system supports economic growth for workers and provides employers with the skills and workforce that they need.

The current education and learning system faces a number of challenges arising from a legacy of deindustrialisation, low expectations, entrenched poor performance, relatively low pay and low skill levels. These have been compounded by reforms to education and skills at a national level which have resulted in a fragmented, centrally driven system, focused on narrow targets and fiscally challenged. The plethora of short-term plans now available often read as sector specific programmes and not as a coherent long-term narrative on how to press forward to improve education, employment and skills.

There is the opportunity and desire to build on the strong foundations witnessed by the Independent Commission for Education and Skills in October 2018 to develop a long-term vision for learning and skills across Doncaster. Stakeholders highlighted some key components of a long-term vision. Through my conversations with individuals and groups from across the borough, I noticed a common desire to start to consider how to develop a system where children, young people and adults thrive, which adopts a whole life approach to learning and work, where children are ready to learn, achieve well and attain good numeracy and literacy skills. A system which recognises achievement and offers opportunities for progression and the development of highly skilled individuals, and fulfilling careers and employment for Doncaster's residents.

Doncaster is proud of its rich heritage and the transformation journey in Education and Skills that has developed over the course of the last three years. All recognised the sheer scale of Doncaster's challenges but were equally optimistic about the significant opportunities present in the borough. There is now a growing recognition that the sum is greater than its parts and by working better together, Doncaster has every opportunity to deliver on its substantial ambitions. **This is the moment for Doncaster to define its long-term future.**

*Michael Jameson, Strategic Advisor for Education and Skills*

# Executive Summary

Doncaster Council is about to begin engaging in discussion with communities through the Doncaster Talks programme. This is a dialogue with local people and our partners that will help us shape our overall borough strategy for the next ten years. The work of Team Doncaster subsequent to the implementation of the *One Doncaster Report (2016)* and *Doncaster Growing Together (2017)* transformed education and skills in the borough and we have delivered on the majority of our commitments – a fact confirmed by the revisit of Doncaster’s Independent Commission for Education and Skills in 2018. Now it is time to think ahead. The majority of our strategic and funding commitments extend only to 2021 and Team Doncaster is now committed to establishing a long-term, ten-year vision for Education and Skills (to 2030). This is an invitation for you to shape the future for learning and skills in our borough.

We know that parents, teachers, employers and other members of the local community have the most valuable insight into how our education and skills system works. We want to know all about what your experiences of the education and skills system have been, and if there are any improvements you would like to see in the future. This is your chance to have a frank, open, and honest conversation with us about how we can work together as Team Doncaster to improve our education and skills system so every resident can reach their full potential and access good employment.



This document provides a framework for consultation, which has been developed by a Strategic Advisor for Education and Skills. As an experienced leader with extensive expertise in these areas, the Strategic Advisor has met with, and posed questions to, many borough and external colleagues, parents and children; providing independent and external challenge and insight to assess the challenges and strengths of the current Education and Skills system, and to suggest a vision with priority themes and actions for the system over the next ten years.

This report first outlines the strengths and challenges faced within the current system – those that we were aware of prior to consultation, and those which were raised following this. The document then outlines a vision for the future system, along with eight key characteristics that we think it ought to exhibit in order to reflect that vision.

We then propose a set of priority areas for action based on these – these will build on the strengths and address the challenges presently facing Doncaster in order to realise a future education and skills system which delivers better outcomes for all of Doncaster’s residents.

## **What Happens Next?**

We would like your views on the current Education and Skills system in Doncaster, and what you would like this to look like over the next ten years. Specifically, we would welcome your views on the following sections:

- **Areas for Development and Future Challenges (p.8)**
- **The Future Vision for the Education and Skills System (p.13)**
- **Eight Key Characteristics of the Future System (p.13)**
- **Five Priority Themes for Action (p.17)**

To share your views, please visit our [consultation web page](#), and complete the [online survey](#).

If you have any questions, please contact

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We will then analyse and collate this feedback, to inform the development of the Strategic Document which will outline a detailed Future Framework for Education on Skills. We will then share this Framework for further public consultation during October 2019.

# Doncaster's Strengths & Challenges

## System Strengths, Including those Identified Through Consultation

Doncaster's Education and Skills system has a number of pre-existing areas of outstanding practice as well as areas that have demonstrated substantial improvement over the course of the last three years:

- **Early Years** – We have one of the best Early Years sectors in the country. **99% of settings are rated as being 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted** (against a national average of 94%). The number of children reaching a Good Level of Development at the end of Early Years is in line with the national average (at 70%), increasing by 28% since 2013.
- **Rapid School Improvement at Primary Level** – 2018 saw progress with Key Stage 2 results, with **the number achieving the expected standard or above in reading, writing and maths rising to 60%**. This demonstrates sustained improvement, with the results for 2016 and 2017 being 46% and 54% respectively. We are closing the gap with the national average too (from 7% to 4% behind).
- **A Strong Interface between Business and Education, mediated by the Doncaster Chamber of Commerce** – Reflected in the development of the new business-led Doncaster University Technical College (UTC), the new Careers-Business Middle Tier Organisation (Opportunities Doncaster) and the new all-age Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) provision for the borough, epitomised through the new digital platform (Start Doncaster) and the work of the Doncaster Careers Hub.
- **An enthusiastic and open approach to innovation in learning** – The system is being increasingly 'infected from the edge' by innovation. This has been clearly evidenced by our innovative, partnership-led organisation, EXPECTYouth, who have not only protected youth services in Doncaster, but expanded their reach significantly. Another example is Partners in Learning's ground-breaking **new Research School**, which is committed to bringing best practice in education to learning in the classroom.
- **Good Social Care for Children and Young People, provided by Doncaster Children's Services Trust (DCST)** – **DCST has recently been rated as 'Good' by Ofsted**. This is key to the Education and Skills System, given the importance of health and wellbeing in relation to educational outcomes for vulnerable learners.
- **A developing culture and heritage provision** – This has been epitomised by major capital investments in the borough's cultural infrastructure. This includes **a new £15m Culture and Learning Centre** and new creative incubator spaces in Doncaster town centre. Building a collaborative approach is central to making this work, which is why Team Doncaster has convened a cross-sectoral Cultural Education Partnership to bring cultural and heritage learning to schools.

- **Sectoral strengths in rail, logistics, health/social care and creative, digital and media**  
– These are identified by Doncaster’s *Inclusive Growth Strategy* as key existing growth sectors for the local economy, with many of these businesses directly linked to and engaged with the local Education and Skills System.

Over the course of the initial consultation process, stakeholders interviewed made it clear that **the current political leadership and Chief Executive offer good support and challenge, with political leaders acting as strong and visible advocates for positive change within the system.** The Education and Skills sector also attested to increasingly effective systems-leadership from the Local Authority, where senior officers have made a significant investment in brokering relationships within the Education and Skills sector.

It is also clear that Team Doncaster is **meeting the challenge posed by the original Independent Commission for Education and Skills through strengthening the local infrastructure for collaboration.** This has been reflected in the recent success of the Inclusion Summit, which has brought partners from across the Education & Skills landscape together to address one of the key priorities for development – inclusive practice in the secondary sector. This has been symptomatic of a pace of expansion in collaboration, also in part driven by a stabilisation in the cast of system-leaders within the borough.

Participation from all sectors of the economy and the local community has expanded over the course of the last five years. Although there is still some way to go in broadening the array of local and external partners involved in the transformation of Education and Skills. The Team Doncaster approach is stronger than ever before but we need to build on this further to deliver for Doncaster.

A key change commented on by many of the people interviewed through this process is the **greater sense of place and increasing pride in Doncaster that has arisen since the *One Doncaster Review*.**

## **Areas for Development & Future Challenges**

### **Known Challenges Facing the Current System**

Doncaster is facing a number of known challenges in the Education and Skills Sector. Moving into the 2020s, resolving these will continue to be the focus of attempts to reform the learning landscape in our borough.

- **High levels of child poverty** – Child poverty stands at 21% in Doncaster, against a national average of 17%. This represents a barrier to learning for too many children in our borough.
- **Low levels of aspiration and social mobility** – Doncaster has consistently ranked amongst the lowest (298<sup>th</sup> out of 324 LA areas in 2017) for the combined indicators which form the social mobility index in the UK. These low levels of social mobility are also reflected in the fact that while the national average is for 1 in 6 of all university applicants to enter Russell Group Universities. In Doncaster, that figure is 1 in 50.

- **Health and wellbeing** – Healthy life expectancy at birth in Doncaster is 59.6 years for males (against a national average of 63.3) and 61.9 for females (against 63.9 nationally). This extends to children – with high levels of childhood obesity. Almost a quarter (23%) of children aged 4-5 years and over a third (35.8%) of children aged 10-11 years are overweight or very overweight. As poverty, poor health and wellbeing have a detrimental impact on learning and cognition.
- **Poor attainment at secondary level** - The average Attainment 8 Score at GCSE stands 3.1% below the national average (28.9% against 32% nationally). In 2018, the proportion of young people with a Level 2 (GCSE level) qualification fell 3.3% to 75.3%, against a national average of 82.2%, placing the borough 139<sup>th</sup> out of 150 nationally.
- **Low attainment of Level Three Qualifications** – The numbers achieving a level 3 qualification at 19 in 2018 stood at 42.7%, against a national average of 57.2%, placing the borough 148<sup>th</sup> out of 150 nationally.
- **Low attainment of HE qualifications/Level Four Qualifications** – The proportion of the working population qualified to NVQ 4 or above stands at 23.6% against a national average of 38.6%. This trend has remained largely static over the course of the last three years, despite increases nationally.
- **Unequal market demand for school places** – The fragmentation of the secondary school system has led to the development of excess capacity within less popular schools. This has led to an uneven distribution of opportunity within the borough and in so doing, has perpetuated and entrenched division and poor performance. This polarity has resulted in substantial over-subscription for some schools and three secondary schools who are substantially below capacity.
- **An increasing number of Children in Need (CIN)** – The number of CIN per 10,000 has gradually been increasing from 345.9 in 2013/14 up to 404.2 in 2016/17 (this equates to 2,646 children). This is in contrast to the national trend which has been gradually declining since 2013/14. Local data shows the rate has continued to increase since then too although there are no comparisons for this yet (404.2 Doncaster; 394.1 Similar Authorities; 348.9 Yorkshire & Humberside; 330.4 England).
- **Doncaster’s productivity per worker is relatively low and our economy is low skilled, low wage** – This means that we struggle to attract and develop high value jobs and the businesses that will create them. Feedback from local businesses has reflected that they need a good local supply of skills/qualified workers before they consider inward investment.

### **Emergent Themes – Arising from the Initial Consultation Process**

*“We have moved away from finger-pointing and we want to work on some shared areas, the Doncaster Opportunity Area has been enormously helpful in this.”*

*“We have moved beyond open hostility but we are not there yet on mutual respect.”*

Whilst there is increasing collaboration across the Education and Skills landscape in Doncaster, **there are barriers to developing a coherent infrastructure for collaboration in the secondary sector and with wider partners.** There is concern that a number of the larger MATs have not always engaged with Local Authority or DfE initiatives and concern within the sector that engagement in the other direction is not always appropriate to the needs of particular schools – at times, **there is a perception that there are ‘preferred partners’ for engagement within the system.** There are some notable strengths, including the Schools Forum and the Doncaster OA, but system-wide collaboration and ownership of change remains a substantial challenge for the borough. **It is time to utilise national, regional and local system-assets and expertise for the benefit of Doncaster.** In so doing, it is necessary to be inclusive, bringing new stakeholders into the collaborative infrastructure and in so doing, ensure that all feel that they are **‘part of Doncaster and part of the solution’** to the ongoing educational and skills challenges.

A consistent theme **was the call for simplicity and clarity in the renewal of strategic priorities for Doncaster.** This includes an understanding of **what sits at the top of the chandelier for Doncaster** – is it the University City, City of Learning, Child Friendly borough or something else? A set of simple, strong core objectives for the borough; shared, owned and underpinned by realistic delivery plans with appropriate resource allocation will meet Doncaster’s challenges in the future.

**There is also the desire, expressed across all the sectors, to ensure that projects are effectively aligned to strategic priorities and delivered.** Many stakeholders expressed the view that there is often a difference between the commitments detailed in public strategy and the delivery on the ground. There are concerns that **a number of commitments exist with no clear road maps** and consequently, they are not always delivered. There is also a concern over unrealistic targets being set for the borough, which can create unrealistic expectations between partners. Therefore, there is a requirement to improve the evaluation of strategy and interventions undertaken across the sector.

## **Feedback from Parents & Young People**

Consultation undertaken with parents, carers, children, and young people thus far has also highlighted a number of issues. **Young people from across the borough have they told us that they felt that they had been designated for an ‘academic’ or a ‘vocational’ education too early** and that they would appreciate transparent routes between the two modes of learning, allowing them to build a curriculum which works for them. Discussions with the Youth Council highlighted the need for **improved mental health and well-being support; improved careers advice** on the range of options open to young people leaving statutory education; **more consistent behaviour approaches** and all **schools being held to account.**

When consulted, parents raised the importance of **a positive school ethos – one which values each child as an individual, raises aspirations, and respects difference.** Parents have told us that **schools need to improve the mental and emotional health provision** available to children, and have stressed the importance of making time in the school day for pastoral

support. The education system must place **‘children at the centre’**; with a **curriculum that engenders positive social relationships, celebrates creativity, and breaks down any barriers to what they can achieve in life and work**. Parents and some head teachers have consistently said that transition planning is a weakness of the system.

Parents of children with SEND expressed a number of key concerns. These included the need to significantly **improve transition planning** at all key stages, and the need for a **curriculum which offers more creativity and provides bespoke support** tailored to the individual needs of each learner. Further perceived issues included an **over-obsession with behavioural policies**, and a **lack of clear pathways and opportunities into life and work** for children with learning difficulties.

## Future Challenges Identified through Consultation

*“Don’t chase too many unicorns; focus on numeracy and literacy”*

Within this renewed collaborative infrastructure, it may be necessary to focus on a number of core issues arising within the system. The following areas emerged from the initial consultation process as potential challenges to focus on as we move into the next decade:

- **The need to emphasise the core focus on literacy, numeracy and essential life skills – Raising outcomes in each of these core areas remains central to the continuing transformation of education and skills in Doncaster.** This is currently a key priority of the Opportunity Area (OA) Programme and should be sustained subsequent to its end in 2021. There is a need to ensure that the whole system is clear about these core priorities and to support them with strong governance and accountability.
- **The need to address the variable inclusion practice across the statutory education system** – Inclusive practice remains highly variable across Doncaster. The result is undermining outcomes for vulnerable learners and creates friction between stakeholders within the system. A system which is committed to ensuring effective achievement for all should embrace all learners, including the most vulnerable, enabling them to access an education that is appropriately matched to their needs, as well as clear defined pathways into adulthood and the world of work.
- **A requirement to improve on communication, responsiveness and pace within the sector, including from the Local Authority** – This was raised as an area of particular concern, with stakeholders raising a number of individual and general cases where communication has not been of the quality that they would expect. There is an urgent requirement to strengthen communications and both create and sustain a culture of open dialogue within Doncaster’s Education and Skills system. For example, the concept of University City was not initially clearly defined or commonly understood, which impacted on the development of the borough’s HE and FE infrastructure (Though, it is to be noted that a programme of work, driven by the University City Partnership, is making the effective communication of the new conceptual framework for Higher Education a priority).

- **The requirement to celebrate both the system and young people’s successes and achievements** – The challenge moving forward is to establish strong, clear and consistent messages of success and achievement in Doncaster. This will support the development of a positive culture of celebration around learning and raise the value of aspiration in the borough.
- **The need for a lifelong learning strategy** – There is no coherent and long-term strategy for the development of a community-wide lifelong learning entitlement within Doncaster at the present time. Given the low wage, low skilled nature of the Doncaster workforce, this is a key weakness of the current system.
- **The need to improve the supply of meaningful job placements, which are linked to career pathways** - It is time to take a step away from the historic strategy of simple work experience to job placements that add value. There is the opportunity to develop sector and employer led career pathways approach to support our young people and adults into secure and rewarding work.
- **The need to simplify the number of core objectives within local learning strategy** – This is the requirement to focus on a few core elements (e.g. literacy and numeracy and essential life skills) and do them really well.
- **Further develop the collaborative infrastructure between business, education and community organisations** – While significant progress has been made in this area already (e.g. the Business-Education Middle Tier Organisation), there is still the requirement to strengthen relationships and purposeful networks to enable better collaboration within the sector and to develop meaningful pathways to fulfilling, high paid work for all.
- **The need to join up local and regional approaches to innovation and to address the health and social care barriers to learning in Doncaster** - The challenge is to engage with all families in the borough to develop a greater sense of parental responsibility, a relevant curriculum to engage learners and a culture of aspiration. This could be conceptualised as a ‘strategy for parents and communities.’ The requirement for a strategic and comprehensive approach to parental engagement was consistently raised as a requirement for the development of the sector.
- **The need to prioritise investment in recruitment and retention of the best teachers and leaders** as part of a broader corporate strategy to promote the wider public sector workforce.

# Doncaster's Future Learning & Skills System

## The Vision for Consultation

Team Doncaster is working in partnership to develop an Education and Skills system which builds on the borough's intrinsic strengths to address some of the core challenges wrought by both our local context and the changing international economy. The OECD 2030 Learning framework outlines the fact that our young people will be facing unprecedented economic, environmental and social challenges operating in the world of tomorrow and there is a need for them to become more innovative, responsible and socially aware. All of these imperatives require the development of a system which is not only focussed on getting the basics (literacy and numeracy; attainment of qualifications) right but also on enabling all residents to think creatively, develop new products and services, new jobs, new processes and methods, new ways of thinking and living, new enterprises, new technologies, new sectors, new business and social models.

The system, however, needs to be inclusive and accessible to all residents in Doncaster. There should also be a focus on developing employees whilst they are in work, creating employment opportunities for all in order to address Doncaster's entrenched challenges and deliver on the borough's ambitious plans for inclusive growth. This is why we would like to consult on the following vision, which we feel is ambitious, forward-thinking and open about our challenges:

*"Our vision is to create a learning city, where life-long education and culture engage and inspire, giving everybody the opportunity to flourish. Learning is at the heart of our ambitious plans for inclusive growth, where everybody has the chance to access a fulfilling career and share in the proceeds of economic development, with no limitations arising from their social background. This will be achieved through maximising the borough's social capital through the effective utilisation of technology, community assets and the pre-existing talents of our people. To achieve this, Team Doncaster will forge a strong relationship with business to create industry-driven career pathways, ensuring that training is linked to employer needs and that everybody has the opportunity to develop their skills and fulfil their aspirations."*

## Key Characteristics for Consultation

The characteristics detailed in the *One Doncaster Report* have been reviewed and tested with initial consultees, co-creating eight characteristics of a successful future Education and Skills system. We now wish to understand whether these are right for Doncaster through this consultation process.



## 1. Great Distributed Leadership

The focus here is on developing strong leadership in all areas of the Education and Skills sector in Doncaster –including schools, businesses, communities and the third sector. Across the local learning and skills landscape, **some system leaders have wider, regional remits and an effective system is one which facilitates their inclusion – they need to feel that they are part of the solution for Doncaster.** This requires a **strong Team Doncaster commitment to the development for all system-leaders within the sector and the creation of a vibrant middle tier for the effective and specialised provision of services.** Developing great leadership within the sector will be vital in forging the new partnerships and delivery mechanisms that are required to respond to our rapidly changing and improving local educational landscape.

## 2. A 'Cradle to Career' Approach

This characteristic is about ensuring that **all Doncaster residents have access to high-quality career pathways with supporting services that are tailored to their individual needs and aspirations.** This will mean that people of all ages will be effectively supported to access fulfilling and rewarding forms of learning that will enable them to pursue a fulfilling career that will also meet the skills challenge posed by our local economy. **Most crucially, employers and sector specialists will be at the heart of this characteristic and will lead on the development of progression pathways.** This cradle-to-career approach will mean that all of our residents, regardless of age, demographic or background, will be supported to access the highly skilled, highly paid jobs of tomorrow.

## 3. High Ambition & High Expectations for All

Our ambition is that **everyone, no matter what their background or circumstances, should have the opportunity to progress through an education and training system that provides the foundation for a happy and fulfilling life.** This is about ensuring that everyone has the tools they need to fulfil their aspirations and participate in the highly skilled, highly paid employment of the future. Having the skills employers need increases people’s earning power, opportunities for better jobs and social mobility. Central to achieving this is the development of progression pathways into Further Education, Higher Education, vocational qualifications, and careers. Alongside this, a strong focus on the basics is needed – developing outstanding literacy and numeracy skills across the education and skills sector is required to support achievement in the borough. This is to be complemented by a wider essential life skills offer, in order to ensure that all young people have the tools they need to participate in our local economy and society.

#### **4. The Development of an Outstanding Workforce**

Despite the considerable economic growth that Doncaster has enjoyed over the course of the last five years, we remain significantly behind in terms of the proportion of our population engaged in highly skilled employment (34.9% against a national average of 45%). Central to fulfilling the borough’s ambitious Inclusive Growth strategy is **ensuring that the workforce is able to participate in the highly paid, highly skilled future growth sectors;** benefitting from raised living standards within a more prosperous borough. Education and Skills are vital to this. **Firstly, Team Doncaster must work collaboratively to ensure that we have more outstanding teachers and leaders in our schools through a focus on investment, recruitment and retention in the sector.** Furthermore, for those who are already in work, it is necessary to develop a collaborative infrastructure between the public sector and business to provide an effective, vocationally-relevant lifelong learning strategy for the borough.

#### **5. An Inclusive Learning System, Which Delivers for all Learners**

Inclusive growth means ensuring that no individual or community is ‘left behind’ in Doncaster. Learning should be no exception; a successful learning system is one which meets the needs of all learners. **An inclusive learning system is a system where all learners including the most vulnerable are supported with an education that is appropriately matched to their needs and capabilities and have clear defined pathways into adulthood and the world of work.** Furthermore, no child should be excluded from opportunity on account of their Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) status. An inclusive learning and skills system is one which is characterised by low exclusion rates and high participation in education – Doncaster has some of the highest Fixed Term and Permanent Exclusion rates in the country and an aim of an inclusive learning system would be working collaboratively to substantially reduce this. For gifted learners, a successful system works together to provide them with the opportunity to access either a world-class technical education or some of the country’s top universities.

## 6. Culture & Heritage at the Centre of the System

Doncaster has distinguished itself over the course of the last decade, making a major investment in arts, culture and heritage. The capacity of an individual to flourish lies beyond formal assessment and should include a wider set of life skills, including creativity and appreciation of the shared local cultural and historic context. **A characteristic of a successful Education and Skills system would be placing this cultural capital at the centre of a borough-wide offer to all learners, with integrated programmes for participation in heritage, culture and learning activities.** Few initial consultees highlighted the centrality of this priority, so its importance will need to be championed across the system. Capitalising on the rich variety of cultural assets in the borough will be vital to the development of an inclusive form of informal lifelong learning for all.

## 7. An Open Approach to Innovation

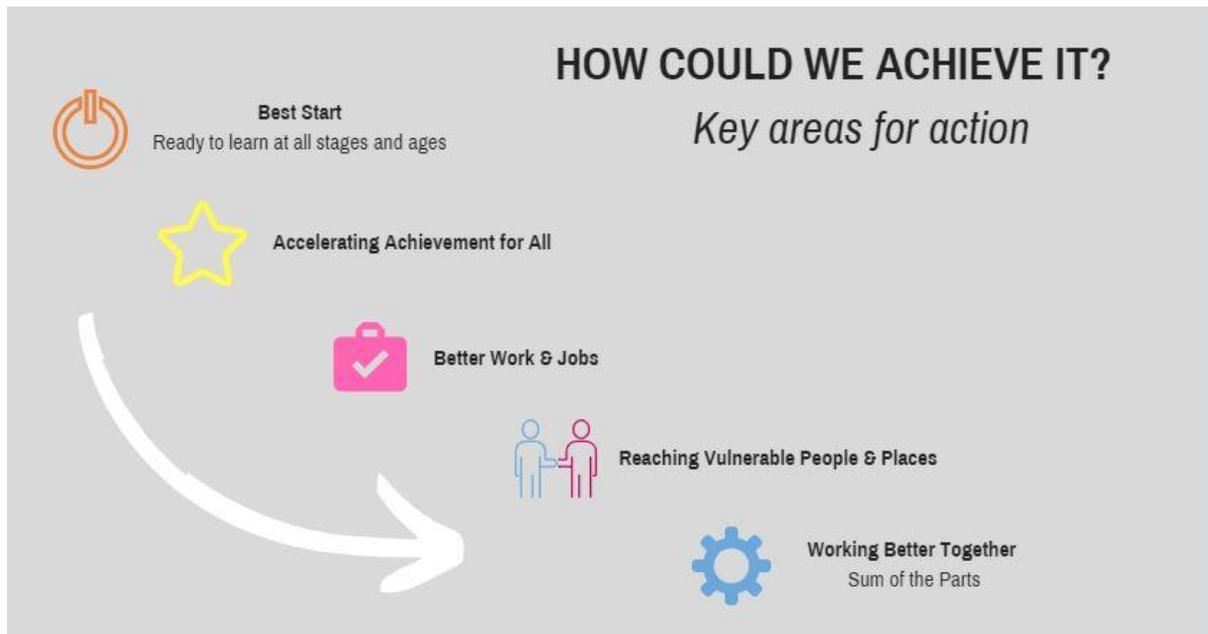
**A successful learning system utilises both nationally-recognised and internationally successful 'best practice' models to engender continuous improvement in the local learning sector.** This includes using technology and community assets to drive forward change in education and skills provision. **A successful learning system also forges strong and lasting partnerships with local, regional and national organisations, as well as academic institutions to ensure that practice in the classroom is robust, innovative and evidence based. This characteristic is also key to addressing the health and social care barriers to learning, which represent an important challenge to Doncaster's learners.** Furthermore, in a landscape of continuing public sector retrenchment, there should be an openness to working collaboratively to secure external funding in order to build capacity and capability within the Education and Skills system.

## 8. Communicating & Celebrating Doncaster as a Place

Promoting Doncaster as a place where all can fulfil their aspirations and the borough as an outstanding place to live, work and learn. **This characteristic is about a developing a system which is open about its challenges, celebrates and praises the successes of its residents and workforce, and being confident in articulating its requirements for future development.** This is about promoting Doncaster as the most child friendly borough in the country and ensuring that our borough is viewed as one of the best places to live, learn and develop a successful and fulfilling career.

## Priority Themes for Consultation

The following five Priority Themes are those areas that it is recommended Doncaster focus on over the next decade to demonstrate these characteristics. These priority areas for action have been chosen on the basis of consultation already undertaken, recent changes in national policy, and known (data informed) challenges.



### 1. The Best Start: Ready to Learn at all Stages & Ages

Doncaster should be one of the best places in the country to raise a family and experience childhood. There is a strong pre-existing strategic commitment through the *Children and Young People's Plan (2017-2021)* to be the most child-friendly borough in the country. Key to delivering on this commitment is the need to ensure that all children get a good start and that they are ready to learn forms the very foundation of a successful education system. Academic evidence conclusively demonstrates the importance of parental involvement in children's learning and aspiration [Desforges, 2003]. A successful education system and a growing, inclusive economy is one where people of all ages face no social or economic barrier to accessing the enriching, fulfilling learning that will allow them to pursue the career of their choosing.

- **Continuing the focus on the first 1,000 Days.**
- **Renewing our focus on speech and language acquisition and development.**
- **Continuing the strong Early Years settings support provided by the Local Authority.**
- **A strong all-age Early Help offer which provides families with the services they need to give their children the best start in life; and which ensures that young people and adults remain engaged through their learning and employment.**

### 2. Accelerating Expectations & Achievement for All

**Outcomes need to improve and at a pace.** There is widespread recognition across the system of the scale of the challenge in improving education and skills and employment prospects in Doncaster. The combination of socio-economic disadvantage, low levels of aspiration and social mobility and challenges in raising the standard of the local learning offer has led to a need to build on the transformation journey that was initiated in 2016. However, high

performing systems are characterised by a culture of high support and respectful challenge with strong partnership and governance arrangements.

Specifically, there is a requirement **to improve numeracy and literacy skills, recruit, develop and retain the best teachers and leaders and develop essential life skills** in our learners in order to raise standards across the board. Furthermore, a strong education and skills system is inclusive and accessible to all with no resident left behind. This includes the offer of an inclusive curriculum, which is tailored to the needs of each young person.

The following recommendations could be instrumental in accelerating expectations and achievement for all:

- **Working with schools and families to improve the delivery of the basics (numeracy and literacy) but also to develop the delivery of essential life skills to children and young people** – forming part of a **“Doncaster Entitlement or Curriculum”** for all.
- **Reducing the level of Permanent, and Fixed Term Exclusions from school and reducing the numbers electively home educated** -- through focussing on implementing consistent behaviour approaches and the adoption of best practice models in inclusion currently promoted through the Doncaster Inclusion Charter, it is hoped that there will be a substantial impact on the rates of exclusion, which are currently far too high.
- **Ensuring that all SEND pupils and vulnerable learners can access appropriate, tailored learning that allows them to fulfil their potential.** Agencies from across Team Doncaster are to work together closely to create defined life and career pathways for young people with SEND needs and vulnerable learners.
- **Development of consistent and effective transition planning at all stages.**
- **Working collaboratively to embed a culture and clear strategy of bespoke support and high challenge across the Education and Skills sector in Doncaster.**
- **A joined up local and regional approach to innovation, making best practice in learning common practice in our classrooms.** Specifically, the focus would be to address the health and social care barriers to learning in Doncaster.
- **Working to sustain the outcomes of the Doncaster OA subsequent to the end of the programme in 2021, ensuring that disadvantaged children and young people receive the same opportunities as their more affluent peers.** This will require working collaboratively to secure further external funding.
- **Prioritising the recruitment and retention of the brightest and the best to teaching, leadership and the wider public sector workforce in Doncaster.**
- **Actively recognising and adequately celebrating achievement within the system.**

### **3. Better Work & Jobs**

*“Every person in Doncaster should have a line of sight to a rewarding, fulfilling career”*

Doncaster lags substantially behind the national average in terms of the attainment of Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications (16.4% & 15% below the national average respectively in 2017). This is holding our economy back, as a low skilled economy is one which faces a major productivity challenge. Over the course of the last nine years, median real wages (in £ per week) in Doncaster have remained stagnant (registering no growth at all in 2017-18), with the average rate (£479) now being even more behind the national average of £555. The proportion of highly skilled jobs sits at 34.6%, against a national average of 45.8% and standing 3% below authorities with similar profiles. To move from a low paid, low skilled economy to a productive, modern local economy with a highly skilled workforce driving economic development means placing our education and skills system at the very heart of our ambitions plans for inclusive growth.

Young people, when consulted, highlighted this as a key area of concern. There is a desire among this group to access meaningful work experience placements and first jobs that will add value, supported by their education setting. They also wanted to be able to access relevant, up to date information about career options, as well clear, well defined pathways to a challenging and rewarding career. It is without doubt that this is vital in ensuring that young people can fulfil their potential, see a prosperous future for them in Doncaster and in so doing; provide the highly skilled labour market our local economy needs.

Specifically:

- **To move away from a system that has historically delivered job placements to one which adds real value for learners.** There is a timely opportunity to improve the supply of skilled workers by the development of pathways into work and for the workforce to become more skilled at work. Industry and employers will be at the heart of this approach to ensure there is the workforce to with the right skills to boost productivity.
- **Team Doncaster must work collaboratively in order to ensure that Post-16 provision is rationalised and suitably matched to the requirements of Doncaster's learners.** This will include the implementation of the borough's Post-16 Review.
- **Key local institutions are to work in partnership to develop a University-level centre of excellence for Health, Social Care and Public Services in the borough of Doncaster.** The offer here will be integrated with qualification-led pathways from other institutions and for lifelong learners, ensuring that progression within the borough's largest economic sector is accessible to all.
- **The University City Partnership will work hard to develop Doncaster's pre-existing assets and centres of excellence and produce a greatly expanded Higher Education offer.** It is anticipated that this will allow Doncaster's numbers of NVQ4 and above qualified residents to rise to the national average by 2030.
- **Team Doncaster partners will work together to forge a stronger relationship between businesses and education and develop sectoral career progression pathways.** This will be facilitated through the development of the new Careers Middle Tier Organisation (Opportunities Doncaster), ensuring that the provision of

qualifications effectively matches the needs of business. Fundamentally, this will be based on a series of sectoral career progression pathways (e.g. creative, media and digital; engineering; health and social care) which will be supported by a 'wrap-around' learning offer at all NQF levels, as well as functional and intermediate level qualifications.

- **There is the need to ensure the types of education and training on offer matches the different local aspirations and needs of our industries.** This means meeting the demand for STEAM qualifications, offering more diverse, customised vocational or technical based learning packages and more high quality apprenticeships for older adults. The growth opportunities presented by Doncaster's emerging industry specialisms will require residents to develop transferable skills. This aligns well with national and sub-regional initiatives (e.g. Future Mobility as a Grand Challenge), but requires us to take a more holistic approach to training, encouraging cross-sectoral working and collaboration.

#### **4. Reaching & Engaging with Vulnerable People & Places**

Doncaster consists of a number of distinct communities, each with their own profile and needs for development. These also reflect a number of significant educational and skill disparities. In Thorne and Mexborough, for example, 36% and 37% of the working-age population respectively have no NQF-recognised qualifications at all (against roughly half that proportion in Tickhill, Sprotborough and Finningley). Socio-economic disadvantage continues to be an issue and a key goal for the system over the course of the next ten years is to build upon the achievements of the Doncaster OA in narrowing the gap in attainment and opportunity between the affluent and their more disadvantaged peers. Through reaching and engaging vulnerable people and places, we can ensure that all of our communities access opportunity and share in the proceeds of growth, with no place or person left behind.

- **Explore developing Doncaster as an accredited RSA 'City of Learning'**, with an expansion of lifelong and community-based learning opportunities for all residents across the borough.
- **Developing a borough where arts and culture engage and inspire**, ensuring that all in our local society can engage and interact with their culture and heritage.
- **Team Doncaster will work together to broaden partnership working arrangements across the borough**, specifically including the Voluntary and Community Sector in decision making and empowering them to further develop their offer to local communities. Services are best delivered closer to people: a successful learning system in Doncaster will deliver both universal and targeted services through schools and local community assets, 'joining up' provision in the locality for the service user.
- **Maximising the social value return for local residents, communities and businesses** from the significant capital and regeneration initiatives currently being undertaken across the Borough.

- **Supporting our most vulnerable learners throughout their life** - Ensuring that those adult learners who have complex lives and needs are able to access learning close to home and to learn in a manner that suits their needs. Specifically, also working as a partnership to support those learners who are transitioning from a SEND school setting to adult provision, to ensure that they can access fulfilling and enriching continuing education where desired.
- **Building on intergenerational practice and adopting a community learning approach** – Ensuring that our Education & Skills system forges strong and enduring connections with both communities and the health and social care system. We believe that our communities have a huge amount to offer schools and learners in our borough and the impact of community involvement on vulnerable learners and outcomes for young people are without question [RSA, 2019]. The implementation of a place-based, socially-situated form of learning will be vital in supporting vulnerable people and places.

## 5. Working Better Together

*“Team Doncaster, the community’s political leadership, and Doncaster Council all clearly recognise the importance of education, learning and good skills on the economy and future prosperity of the borough. This recognition is now extending to the shaping of a new role for Team Doncaster: inspiring, leading and cajoling various partners drawn from every sector and occupation to play their part in cementing the importance of education, learning and skills in Doncaster.”*

**Greater than the sum of our parts...**In order to demonstrate those great characteristics of a successful education and skills system and meet the needs posed by the proposed key themes for Doncaster, it is necessary to strengthen our ability to work together and deliver the Education and Skills system that Doncaster’s residents deserve. When the Independent Commission revisited Doncaster in October 2018, they attested to the strength of the Team Doncaster partnership and the good work that was being undertaken across all sectors in the local community to transform the Education and Skills System. This is an enduring strength and it is one of the key assets that the community brings forward into the next decade. Everyone has a role to play in supporting the ambition to offer a strong cradle to career pathway for all of our residents. There is now so much more to do to not only bring Doncaster’s education and skills system up to the national average but to produce a form of learning that is relevant, socially situated and accessible to all. To achieve this, the system should recognise that **Team Doncaster is greater than the sum of its parts; and must come together to implement system-wide change in Doncaster.**

This is a key strategic moment to harness our collective commitment to learning. Everybody who has a stake in our local education and skills sector, from pupils in statutory education to our HE Institutions, can get involved to deliver a learning system which displays those characteristics for success. This is why we need to establish the role that everybody can play in delivering for Doncaster, outlining the expectations of system leaders including the council,

local education leaders, CEOs of MATs and the DfE. In addition, doing this will help facilitate and coordinate the vital role of parents, young people, community organisations and businesses can play in ensuring that all residents have access to an excellent education and fulfilling careers. This could be complimented by an Employment and Skills Charter, which will address the issues faced by employers in accessing appropriate training and commits the local education and skills sector to working with employers to develop the labour market skills that they require.

Other localities have had various degrees of success in mobilising their local assets to develop a culture and a sense of place whereby everybody can benefit by everybody contributing. The Oldham Cooperative Borough, Wigan Deal and Bradford Education Covenant are just three examples of successful models that could be utilised for the development of learning and skills in Doncaster. Crucial to making the Doncaster model and its implementation a success, there will be a requirement **for a full and partner-owned strategy for the delivery of Doncaster's ambitions for Education and Skills** - with 5 to 10 year delivery plans underpinned by clear, agreed, and mutually understood roadmaps for the development of Education and Skills in the borough. With this in mind, a number of key further recommendations are proposed:

- **To establish through consultation and engagement a framework of entitlements and expectations of all the key stakeholders** including learners and parents in shaping and delivering on the key priorities to accelerate education outcomes and develop confident and skilled employees.
- **For the Director of Children's Services (DCS) to arrange strategic forums to consider and address key strategic issues attended by system leaders.**
- **For the DCS with corporate colleagues to develop an infrastructure to further strengthen collaboration at a local, regional and national level.**
- **To ensure that there are clear delivery mechanisms to implement the partner owned strategy** with delivery plans scaffolded on a 3, 5 and 10-year basis.
- **To underpin these delivery plans with sustainable and partner-led governance arrangements**, supported by appropriate levels of capability and implemented subsequent to the conclusion of the OA Programme in 2020.